

**RECENT DEVELOPMENTS  
IN  
'ECUMENICAL EDUCATION'  
IN ENGLAND AND NORTHERN IRELAND:**

models of joint Church secondary schools

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis focuses on three main areas of interest in ecumenical education. First, there is the historical and political context, without which the whole discussion would lack anchorage in the real situation. The evolution of Church schools within the national system of education in Britain has a direct relevance to the story. Secondly, questions concerning the nature and purpose of Church schools, both Anglican and Roman Catholic, in this country have concentrated the minds of Church leaders and educationists, particularly against the background of new curriculum developments and of financial stringency. Out of this discussion arise questions concerning the real possibilities for closer ecumenical cooperation in education between the Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches in Britain, in the light of ecclesiastical directives to do together whatever is possible and permitted. The atmosphere has been changed following the Second Vatican Council and the exchange of visits between Pope John Paul II and Archbishop Runcie of Canterbury in 1982 and 1989.

The third area for consideration is the possibility of ecumenical schools in which cooperation is more than amicable coexistence but takes a concrete institutional form: how do the converging discussions within the two communions on matters of theology, religious education, and the essential purpose of having Church schools at all, relate to the realities of educational practice at the 'chalk-face'? To try to illuminate these problems, two case studies have been selected from the various joint Anglican/Roman Catholic schools across the country, each evolving in its own peculiar environment. One was created by the amalgamation of an Anglican girls' and a Roman Catholic mixed secondary school in suburban Surrey; the other was integrated from its conception in the polarised community of Belfast. The contrasts reflect different historical, cultural, educational and ecclesiastical traditions between England and Northern Ireland. The similarities arise in that Lagan at Belfast adopted ideas implemented at Redhill where relevant to the Irish situation. The aim of the thesis has been to identify the key processes by which ecumenical education became more than just a hypothetical dream but rather a viable option for the future.

## PERSONAL PREFACE

My interest in ecumenical education began in Raffles Hotel, Singapore in 1978. Travelling overland in Asia, I received a letter from the chairman of governors of St. Bede's joint Church School, Redhill, inviting me to apply for the post of Head of Religious Education. My experiences over the next few years were incorporated in an M.A. dissertation (1983) which proved the stimulus for further research into the area of ecumenical education. At the same time my involvement in the national Anglican/Roman Catholic Committee on ecumenical relations prompted further reflection on and dissemination of the St. Bede's experience.<sup>1</sup> The visit of two colleagues from Belfast to Redhill in preparation for the founding of Lagan College in 1981 marked the beginning of my interest in integrated education in Northern Ireland.

It was suggested to me that the first-hand material collected for the M.A. dissertation would make a good starting-point for further research. Professional constraints, however, were considerable. I moved into secondary school senior management in 1982 and, for the next ten years as deputy and as head, found myself wholly absorbed by major developments in curriculum change (e.g. GCSE, National Curriculum) and in management (e.g. industrial action, LMS), the pace and scope of which could not have been realistically anticipated. Many researchers feel that their experience in writing theses comes to feel like painting the Forth Bridge. As each new chapter was drafted, it was quickly overtaken by new initiatives. The

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<sup>1</sup> Chadwick P. and Gladwell M. (1987) Joint Schools, Canterbury Press and Fowler Wright.

necessity of revising previous drafts and writing up the new material all during the school holidays led to frustration at the inevitably snail-like progress.

Back in 1983 there was, and even now is, very little published material on ecumenical education. Therefore the data on St Bede's came mainly from interviews, diocesan and school documents, and personal experience. Similarly the initial studies on Lagan College, some first drafted in 1985, had to be based on personal interviews and professional judgements, since university researchers had not considered one (then independent) integrated school worth detailed review, and seemed preoccupied with analyzing the effects of segregated education, even to the point of dismissing integrated education as not being a valid way forward.<sup>2</sup>

It was not until 1992 that my appointment to South Bank University allowed legitimate and appropriate research time to revise, update, and significantly reconstruct the pattern of data collected over the previous twelve years, as well as follow up new issues in the case studies in 1991-2. Further analysis and evaluation of the wide-ranging developments in educational politics and ecumenical theology were also central to the research. Rather than be discouraged by the enforced breaks in the research, I decided to make a virtue out of necessity: what started as snapshot case studies in the early 1980s became a longitudinal survey of the development of two secondary schools over a decade, as they evolved from hesitant pioneers in an educational experiment to well-established, oversubscribed school

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<sup>2</sup>Gallagher B. and Worrall S. (1981). Christians in Ulster 1968-80 Oxford University Press p.171.



communities providing exemplars of good practice in ecumenical education.

Neither would claim that they had 'got it right', and each school is in the process of developing major new initiatives as it moves forward to the twenty-first century. But both of them in different ways point a way forward for the Churches and for educationists who believe (reflecting the declaration of the 1952 Faith and Order Conference of the World Council of Churches at Lund) that Christians should not do separately what can be done together.

## CHAPTER 1

### THE MAIN RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND METHODOLOGY

#### 1. Ecumenism and the Church School in secular Britain

The ecumenical movement in this country has made more progress this century than anyone could have dared to expect. The anti-Roman Catholic feelings stirred by the burning of Cranmer, Ridley, and Latimer during Mary's brief counter-reformation were no less influential than the execution of Thomas More and John Fisher in generating resentment and rivalry between two Christian communions. The popular celebration of Guy Fawkes' night has now probably lost its overtones of anti-Roman prejudice,<sup>3</sup> but it long reflected an in-built fear of Popery widespread among Englishmen. The Victorian age brought several additional problems. Irish labourers entered Britain, willing to accept lower wages and retaining a separate ghetto-like community particularly in Liverpool and London. Each Sinn Fein murder exacerbated anti-Irish and therefore anti-Catholic feeling. Protestants were bewildered by the profound effects of the Tractarian movement in the Church of England on the one hand, and the influence of Liberal Theology on the other. At the same time, the rise of defiant Ultramontanist in Roman Catholicism, culminating in the decree of 'papal infallibility' at the Vatican Council of 1870, and Leo XIII's 1896 declaration

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<sup>3</sup> Lewes, Sussex, is an exception. Lewes had a Lollard cell in the fourteenth century, before the Protestant Reformation, and harbours some strongly anti-papal sentiments still.

against Anglican orders (Apostolicae Curae), served only to reinforce the feeling of division and of doors towards unity being abruptly slammed.

Yet the twentieth century has been marked by various attempts, not all successful, to move towards reconciliation between separated churches. Tractarian theology, with its emphasis on the one visible body of the Church and on eucharistic sacrifice, reminded Anglicans that they shared a common heritage with Roman Catholics. The attempts, nervous at first but later mountingly confident, by Roman Catholic theologians to come fully to terms with historical criticism of the Bible have also removed barriers to mutual understanding. But the event of outstanding significance was the 1962 Second Vatican Council called by Pope John XXIII, which put the ecumenical movement unequivocally on the map, with a decree on Ecumenism that included a look of affection and longing towards the Anglican Communion. The Council not only established a Secretariat for Christian Unity within the Roman Curia, but also paved the way for the visit of the Archbishop of Canterbury, Michael Ramsey, to Pope Paul VI in 1966. The mutual concord then achieved led to the establishment of the first Anglican/Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC), whose work (1970-1982) in uncovering common ground on eucharist, ministry, and authority, contributed much to increased ecumenical understanding. The Common Declaration signed by Pope John Paul II and Archbishop Runcie at Canterbury in 1982, unimaginable at the beginning of the century, showed how much progress had been made and provided the necessary endorsement to further ecumenical cooperation.

Although the Vatican's eventual response in 1991 to the Final Report of ARCIC I was not particularly encouraging, the Pope recognised that the ARCIC process had shown

'it is possible to go to the heart of the serious differences between Christians and still persevere in a fraternal and progressive dialogue...Ecumenism is not solely a matter for the highest Church authorities. It also involves a 'dialogue of life' at the level of exchanges and cooperation between believers at every level' (Address to the English Roman Catholic bishops, 17 March 1992).

In education, Church schools have developed alongside State schools throughout the present century. The so-called 'dual system' has allowed the Churches the opportunity to develop their traditional involvement in education backed by financial assistance from the government. Their position has not been immune from criticism. The critics of Church Schools urge that they are from a secular standpoint anachronistic, and from a social standpoint divisive<sup>4</sup>. Today's society is predominantly secular in tone; that is to say, its fundamental values are deeply unsympathetic to religious voices that question the dedication of western society to happiness in terms of power, honour, wealth, and sex. Church attendance figures are low; the multi-cultural emphasis in education makes a narrow focus on an exclusively Christian culture appear outdated, reflective of an obsolete social situation; and the Churches (in common with virtually all welfare agencies in society) suffer acute financial stringency. On the other hand, Church schools are usually over-subscribed; parents increasingly exercise their right to choose a religious school for their children; articulate Christian educationists are contributing fresh ideas to the current debate; and recent moves in ecumenical relations have provided additional incentive for schools to take the

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<sup>4</sup>Discussed in The Fourth R (1970), The Durham Report, S.P.C.K., para. 475 and Tilby, A. (1979) Teaching God, Collins, chapter 5.

specifically religious and moral ingredient in Christian education seriously. Setting aside the apparent ambivalence of contemporary English society about its Christian inheritance, the coincidence in the past twenty years of ecumenical development with economic belt-tightening has prompted the creation of joint Church schools in several places in Britain. These schools have often been brought into being by the amalgamation of two denominational schools, preceded by local and national consultations, in order to provide a viable Christian school in the locality.

There is an important additional factor. Religious education in Church schools is drawn in two apparently different directions - on the one side towards catechetical instruction of children from committed Christian families; on the other side towards academic RE teaching which does not demand personal 'commitment' but leads the pupil into an understanding of what the Christian faith is, what its history has been, how burning contemporary issues can be looked at from a religious perspective<sup>5</sup>.

A series of questions arises here: how does the Christian school explicitly nurture the faith of its pupils while educating them to be intellectually critical? What should be the relationship between the Christian school and the nearby parish communities? In what ways, if any, will the ethos or community spirit of a Christian school be distinguished from that of a county school? To what extent will that ethos affect the teaching of non-religious subjects in the curriculum and the way in which members of the school deal

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<sup>5</sup>The problems created by this polarisation of the confessional and phenomenological approaches to RE are further explored in an article by Nicola Slee in British Journal of Religious Education, vol.11 no.3, Summer 1989.

with each other? If a clear strategy for the Church school is to be developed, for example to facilitate effective school appraisal, to implement the requirements of the National Curriculum and Assessment, or to develop new patterns of relationship between schools and with local communities, Christian educationists need to address these issues.<sup>6</sup>

This study is interested not merely in the coming together of two religious traditions which for four hundred years have led independent lives, but also in the proper role of Christian education in equipping pupils to take their place in a society in which religion is often pushed out to the periphery. These two themes are far from unrelated, since the marginalisation of religion would be considerably less drastic if Christian communions, with a vast shared inheritance, felt the mutual confidence in each other to speak and act together both in worship and in relation to the world outside the church door.

My research questions therefore can be articulated as follows:

- i) under what circumstances may joint Church schools come into being?
- ii) under what circumstances can they survive and flourish?
- iii) what is their potential and actual contribution to the life of the Churches?
- iv) what is their potential and actual contribution to education and society at large?
- v) has their time come?

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<sup>6</sup> cf. On Appraisal in Catholic Schools 2nd Edition (1991), Department of Catholic Education and Formation. Lankshear D., (1992) Looking for Quality in Church Schools, National Society.

## 2. Sources and Methodology

The thesis attempts to explore the historical, social, political and cultural contexts<sup>7</sup> in which Christian education has evolved, with particular reference to ecumenical options for Anglican and Roman Catholic schools in the secondary sector. As this researcher's own professional responsibilities have developed over the past decade, the research study has modified its initial focus on ecumenical theology and religious education to one concerned more with Church school management and policy-making, a shift accelerated by the need to analyse the implications for Church schools of the plethora of educational legislation since 1986.

These developments might have created problems in coherence and methodology. Perhaps it would have been easier to concentrate on 'theology'; but the complexity typical of research in education, drawing on a variety of disciplines and approaches<sup>8</sup> in order to speak convincingly to the educational reality, opens up the opportunity for a valuable holistic perspective. Focusing on particular school communities through the use of qualitative case-studies has been facilitated by naturalistic research methods<sup>9</sup> which allowed the researcher to explore freely with the participants (eg. through

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<sup>7</sup>The contexts of case-studies are discussed in Adelman, C. et al. (1980) 'Rethinking Case-Study' in Simons, H. (ed.) Towards a Science of the Singular, C.A.R.E., occasional paper 10.

<sup>8</sup>cf. Walsh, P. (1993) Education and Meaning, Cassells

<sup>9</sup>cf. Stake, R. (1985) 'Case-Study' in Nisbet, J. Megarry, J. and Nisbet, S. (eds.) World Year Book of Education, Kogan Page, p.277-8

interview, document analysis, or observation<sup>10</sup>) those issues which emerged in the school context; to be drawn into 'a complex set of politically sensitive relationships'<sup>11</sup> and gradually to begin to identify more general principles relevant to a wider audience.

During the period of the research, the case studies of the two joint schools selected have also undergone major restructuring as earlier developments were reassessed and new issues arose. The difficulties of comparing the distinctive cultures and structures of Redhill and Belfast were offset, to some degree, by the fact that Lagan College from its inception drew heavily on the early experience of St. Bede's as appropriate to its own community. In England, apart from around fifty Methodist primary schools (of which about half are shared with Anglicans), only Anglicans and Roman Catholics have substantially invested in Church schools; by contrast, alongside the Roman Catholics in Northern Ireland, the Anglicans are only one of several influential Protestant denominations with a vested interest in denominational education. In Redhill, there was relatively scant source material other than that produced by the school itself, eg. prospectus; booklets for staff, parents or pupils; minutes of meetings, etc. Even in Northern Ireland, where quantitative research comparing schools has been extensive, qualitative in-

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<sup>10</sup>cf. Miller, L. and Lieberman, A. (1988) 'School Improvement in the United States, Qualitative Studies in Education, vol.1, no.1, p.4.

<sup>11</sup>cf. MacDonald, B. and Walker, R. (1977) 'Case Study and the Social Philosophy of Educational Research' in Hamilton, D. et al. Beyond the Numbers Game, Macmillan, p. 185.



depth studies of a particular integrated school are rare.<sup>12</sup>

Much of the case-study work has had to be based on the writer's professional experience and personal reflections<sup>13</sup>, the validity of which is subject to appropriate safeguards and cross-checking.<sup>14</sup> In many cases the professional participant's viewpoint<sup>15</sup> can have at least as much validity as that of a detached observer. A personal involvement in the first case-study naturally colours and influences the analysis of the second. Nevertheless the process is two-way in that, for example, reflections on different joint schools bring into prominence issues which throw fresh light on a school that experience has made 'too familiar' to the researcher.<sup>16</sup> Nothing is ever quite the same between two similar institutions, and there is food for thought both in the

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<sup>12</sup>This observation is confirmed by Gallagher A. (1989) 'Education in a divided society: Research Issues and questions' in Community and the Curriculum, Conference October 1989, Cooperation North.

<sup>13</sup>E.R. House has written of the 'intuitive tacit knowledge derived from professional experience and participation': (1979) Evaluating with Validity, Sage, p.49. See also Stenhouse, L. (1975) An Introduction to Curriculum Research and Development, Heinemann, Chapter 10 on 'The teacher as researcher'.

<sup>14</sup> Compare Robert Stake's remarks on 'the naturalistic researcher' in (1978) Educational Researcher vol.7, no.2, p.5

<sup>15</sup> For a discussion of 'action research' see Kemmis S. and McTaggart R. (1982), The action research planner; Geelong, Victoria, Deakin University Press. Also McNiff J. (1988), Action Research: principles and practice, Macmillan.

<sup>16</sup> Robert Walker has expressed the opinion that by doing case-study research the researcher is changed: see House E.R. (ed) (1986) New Directions in Educational Evaluation, Falmer Press, p.104. No doubt it is a truism of all serious investigation that, in the process of assembling the data and discerning their pattern and structure, the questions being put to the evidence undergo modifications which can be far-reaching, and that in consequence even the very familiar may come to take on a new look.

likenesses and in the differences. Furthermore the writer's subsequent professional experience of assisting in the development of a new Anglican Church school out of the remnants of a county school has provided valued insights into the nature and purpose of Church schools in contemporary society, apparently deeply secularist and yet profoundly valuing the specific ethos for which Church schools stand.

The case studies are not the whole story of the thesis nor the sole determination of perspective. In the historical chapters, autobiographical material, such as the memoirs of R. A. Butler, plays an important role in evaluating the critical issues of the debates and negotiations of the past, and helps to interpret the historical documentation drawn from such sources as Hansard. The retelling of the history of past debate on the subject is more than the retreading of old paths, since in the delicate area of ecumenical cooperation the attitudes of the main protagonists in the discussions of half a century or more ago have an important bearing on those of today. Their thoughts and intentions reflect community attitudes and perhaps also prejudices that may be modified but are not dead.

Biographical sources are also of value insofar as they provide an independent assessment of the central characters in the debate. From a comparison between Archbishop William Temple and Cardinal Hinsley, it is obvious that the former saw education as one of his highest priorities: not only had he been a headmaster himself (even if not generally rated very successful), but he was strongly committed to social change, particularly through the medium of adult education. On the other hand, Hinsley was more preoccupied with

enhancing the status of Roman Catholics in Britain; and while his advisers ensured that Roman Catholic schools were institutionally safeguarded under the 1944 Act, the challenge of a fuller and more thoughtful advocacy of Catholic education was taken up by Bishop Beck in 'The Case for Catholic Schools' (1955, Catholic Education Council).

Certain documents and particular seminal works concern questions fundamental for the investigations in this thesis: for example, the 1970 Durham Report, The Fourth R addressed many of the key issues for Anglican Church schools, as did the National Society's A Future in Partnership (a title given a question-mark prior to the debate of 1985 in the General Synod). The Roman Catholic discussion on the nature of religious education has been no less challenging in the writings of the first three holders of the office of National R.E. Advisor: Kevin Nichols on catechesis, Paddy Purnell on the place of Christian nurture, or Jim Gallagher on Weaving the Web. No investigation of ecumenical education since 1944 can ignore the fresh standpoints that such contributions represent.

Contemporary history is not easy to write. The sources available may be partial and one-sided, and the whole truth is not available to the researcher. This fact necessarily qualifies negative judgements: one can more easily state what is the case than what is not. This difficulty particularly bears on the chapter considering the implications of the 1988 Education Reform Act. The writer was fortunate enough to have access to Bishop Leonard of London during and after the period of the parliamentary debates, and to have been invited to make a personal contribution to the lobby during the discussion of religious education and the National Curriculum. Naturally such experiences

of direct personal conversation with leading figures provided a valuable insight and perspective on the central issues and have helped to interpret the Hansard debates and contemporary discussions in the media. The proposed legislation was brought before Parliament with a sense of speed and urgency, and practitioners struggling to make sense of such rapid change have been helped by various publications (e.g. Cox E. and Cairns J.M., (1988) Reforming Religious Education, Kogan Page); however there has been relatively little written which has focused on the implications of the recent legislation for the relationship between Church and State. I submit material which I believe makes a personal and independent contribution to the debate.

A second difficulty has been encountered in the case-study material. It inheres in the nature of the story that not all the evidence I have used lies in the public domain. Some material facts and value-judgements have become available by personal investigation, but the reader wishing to check that any given statement precisely corresponds to generally accessible material cannot always be sure of being told where to go. To the best of my knowledge and belief, all the unprinted papers in typescript or in manuscript to which I have been allowed access still exist, most obviously in the archives of the case-study schools. But some statements of fact and some opinions recorded depend on private correspondence and personal conversations. In all cases of oral communication, I made notes or tape recordings at the time as a safeguard against the fallibilities of memory.

The documenting of the sequence of historical events which led to the establishment of a joint ecumenical school, uniting Anglicans and Roman Catholics, at St. Bede's, Redhill, was an undertaking first inspired by a

fortunate accident in the writer's experience. The researcher was head of religious education at St. Bede's for over three years, and in 1979 in the staff room of the school a conversation revealed the existence of an envelope-file, containing many of the documents and minutes of meetings held during the period of gestation which led up to the birth of St. Bede's as an ecumenical comprehensive school. This had been deposited with one of the staff in the R.E. department by a Roman Catholic sister who had not long before left the school to go on to another post elsewhere. That chance discovery first stimulated the attempt to embark on this research.

The material was a fortunate find and full of interest. Without it the story of St. Bede's could hardly have been effectively told except in the most general terms. Nevertheless the dossier of papers turned out to be both incomplete and muddled. Its preservation showed that one individual had thought the material important, but the genetic process, not a well understood fact or series of facts of which the policy-making figures in the school were sharply conscious, still had to be quite laboriously reconstructed. The discovery led on to further researches in the files to investigate the school's few records of its initial stages and evolution and, in these researches, the then headteacher (Dr. Phil Dineen) could not have been more helpful in encouraging the project and in granting access to the documents in her care.

The reader who sets out to confirm the veracity of all that is said in the two case-studies is, I should frankly acknowledge, in the same difficulty. There is here limited reference to printed sources, and most of the work has rested on manuscript or oral material. The paucity of published material has its reason in the fact that ecumenical schools remain relatively few and young,

and little has hitherto been written about their origin and their operations. Naturally there has been some useful printed material about the shifting pattern of the Church's involvement in education, about the developing ecumenical movement in this century, and about the continuing debate concerning the ends and proper means of religious education. Echoes of such discussions appear in newspaper reports and magazine articles, some of which have contributed valuable matter. But the detailed reconstruction of the jigsaw of events in the two schools has depended in the main on personal interviews,<sup>17</sup> visits, lengthy telephone conversations, letters and questionnaires. In the nature of things there are gaps in the evidence, and I have not been able to present an exhaustive or complete picture<sup>18</sup>. Accordingly, although everything said is, I believe, true, the story told here is no doubt less than the whole truth, and other participants in the enterprise may well see things in a different light from that presented here.

Anonymity is normally and rightly expected in an academic research project, especially when the discussion centres upon the work of living people. There

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<sup>17</sup>cf. Patton, M. (1980) Qualitative Evaluation Methods, Sage, p. 197f, identified three types of qualitative interviewing: 'informal conversational', 'general guide approach' and 'standardised open-ended', all of which I have used as appropriate. Open discussion of issues, the exploitation of common understandings and encouraging proactivity on the part of the interviewee all enhanced the interview process (cf. Stake, R. (1978) op.cit. p.5; MacDonald and Sanger (1982) in House, E.R. (ed.) Evaluation Studies Review Annual, Sage, vol. 7, p.179).

<sup>18</sup>In Belfast there were difficulties in understanding the local accent and even in gaining access to data (e.g. the author of a relevant M.A. dissertation insisted on its embargo for at least 20 years and a church spokesman assuming a request for an interview was from the media, put the telephone down - personal recommendations from bishops were often the only key to access). MacDonald, B. and Walker, R. (1977) op. cit. p.187, comment on the inevitability of case-studies being 'partial accounts'.

is a difficulty in the present case. This study is based on a small group of schools with a particular religious stance, and the near-uniqueness of the schools would have made the standard procedure look faintly ridiculous if pursued systematically. Any reasonably intelligent private eye would be able to find out at least who the main institutions and persons are, and certain prominent individuals can be anonymous only in an artificial and technical or formal sense. I have, however, left most individual staff unnamed, and very few are actually identifiable, particularly important sometimes in the context of Northern Ireland. In defence of what will at first sight seem a breach of an academic ethical code, it may be remarked that the ecumenical schools from whose record most of the narrative is drawn have been, from the very inception of the project, most generous in encouraging, fostering and facilitating the research. The respective headteachers have even been kind enough to cast an eye over this manuscript. I have reason to be confident that, on reading these pages, the present governors and heads of these schools will not pray to be delivered from a too candid friend.

As the research progressed, a related problem emerged. Some parts of the material affect and reflect the work of friends and colleagues. In presenting a synthesis of the materials, the researcher was inevitably faced by the problem of confidentiality. Many colleagues have been so good as to express themselves to me, whether in conversation or by letter, in terms which have been frank. The confidentiality of some parts of what they have said must be respected, and I hope that none of those whom I consulted will feel betrayed by

what I have written in these pages<sup>19</sup>. At the same time it is fair to recognise that the reader of the story is placed at some disadvantage. I have not felt free at each point to specify the identity of the witnesses whose evidence, in reply to my questions, has often been fundamental to the understanding of the attitudes of those involved. To my many consultants I owe it to make it emphatically clear that there is no implication that there has been something to hide. The story of the schools' genesis is one of utterly high-minded endeavour mingled with some apprehension and caution, of courage and boldness crossed with misgiving and fear, but with an outcome whose success was made possible in large measure by the way in which the fears and misgivings were met and contained.

The operation of placing a working community under the microscope creates a responsibility for the researcher in presenting the findings. In most research there are risks of misinterpretation and misrepresentation. This applies to the complete outsider attempting to look with a detached and objective eye at a school, and equally to the internal evaluator whose advantage of far deeper inside knowledge of aspects opaque to the outsider is likely to be offset by the considerable difficulty of achieving a sense of proper distance from the situation. The research project first presented itself as an intellectual challenge because of my own personal experience as head of the religious education department in a developing comprehensive ecumenical school. This obviously provided immediate access to first-hand information

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<sup>19</sup> B. MacDonald, advocating 'democratic evaluation', argues that informants should be given control as well as confidentiality: (1974) Evaluation and the Control of Education, C.A.R.E., Norwich, p.227. Those who granted me interviews have corrected a few factual errors but have not expressed a desire to contradict the judgements I have offered.



and knowledge in one of my case-studies, but also involved the double role of being both an actor in the play and the playwright, with consequent handicaps in trying to take an objective and independent view.<sup>20</sup> I have consciously tried to be as fair to everyone concerned as possible, but do not delude myself into supposing that the story has not been told from a point of view and from certain presuppositions and value-judgements born of my own experience particularly within Anglicanism.<sup>21</sup> The personal factor cannot be excluded: impartiality in relation to colleagues is not perfectly simple. Their response to questions and consultations was always direct, and seemed to the researcher unreserved, but it would be naïve to think that the answers could never have reflected their personal relationship with their questioner as a former staff colleague.<sup>22</sup> On the one hand their relationship helped them to feel able and willing to speak to somebody who understood the situation from the inside. On the other hand, they may well have been reluctant to be immediately critical about aspects of the school's work which the questioner contributed to bringing about. I feel conscientiously able to declare that I have never knowingly slanted the story, never suppressed anything that

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<sup>20</sup>Peter Mitchell, at a seminar at the London Institute of Education (11 May 1992) urged that 'tradition-laden discourse', with its implicit contextualized insights, could be more effective than detached critical discourse, with its explicit decontextualised approach.

<sup>21</sup>E.R. House's view is that an evaluator should be involved and responsive, striving to be 'impartial rather than simply objective'; quoted in House E.R. (ed) (1986) New Directions in Educational Evaluation, Falmer Press, p.71. I take this to mean that a correct and truthful report on the facts does not preclude value judgements made on the basis of those facts, and vice versa. Merriam, S. (1988) emphasises the importance of the researcher acknowledging background assumptions (Case Study Research in Education, Jossey Bass, p.172-3)

<sup>22</sup>Peshkin, A. (1988) noted that personal qualities can 'skew, shape, block, transform' a research project ('In Search of Subjectivity-One's Own', Educational Researcher, vol. 17 no.7, p.17)

might seem awkward, and never attributed attitudes which were not explicit in the documents or oral evidence.

There were a number of occasions where I found myself a facilitator<sup>23</sup> as much as a researcher in the case-studies. Particularly in Belfast where communal divisions make dialogue (in the sense of sympathetic listening to the other partner) difficult if not impossible and where ecumenism is regarded by many as a polite term for treachery, I was able through interviews to clarify viewpoints and to correct misconceptions between Church leaders and among educationists. In Redhill similarly, staff who had worked with me ten years previously used the opportunity of the interview to reflect on a decade of changes, and new staff were often keen to seek my views on how the school developed into the present.

A dominant question has been whether or not different ecumenical schools manifest sufficient similarities to suggest certain shared answers to certain shared problems. Generalisations from one ecumenical school applied to another create doubts and difficulties, since each has its own history and context. As more school governors seek to explore the option, and as the already established schools are supported by their National Association formed in June 1992, common principles can more easily be identified. Religion can be the most divisive or the most uniting force in human society; moving more firmly away from the former and towards the latter is an ideal that inspires widespread assent. If others come to contemplate embarking on

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<sup>23</sup> The point is made by Gill Kirkup, in House E.R. (ed) (1986) New Directions in Educational Evaluation, Falmer Press, p.76.

similar projects in the future, this record may perhaps be of service in noticing points both where mistakes were made (usually with the noblest and best of intentions) and where a breakthrough on the path to success became possible. That the story told here is, so far as it goes, true, even if inevitably less than the whole truth, may be vindicated by the acknowledgement of its veracity by those who have been directly concerned in the establishment of the schools under review.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Robert Stake has argued that the validity of 'naturalistic generalizations' depends on the self-reflective researcher acknowledging limitations, yet allowing the readers to recognize the application and relevance of the data to their own perspective. The truths contained in a successful case-study report, like those in literature, are 'guaranteed' by the 'shock of recognition'. See Simons H. (ed) (1980) Towards a Science of the Singular, C.A.R.E. occasional paper 10, p.52.

## CHAPTER II

### AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE CHURCHES AND EDUCATION IN ENGLAND

#### 1. Introduction

In European countries other than Britain, nineteenth century secularisation meant that the Church's role in education (entirely dominant at the primary level) was the subject of fierce controversy between Church and State. In England the conflict was not so much between Church and State, perhaps because, even after the constitutional revolution of 1828-32, the distinction could be blurred in the minds of many. The basic conflicts were between the different Churches, among which the Church of England possessed a dominance resented by the other bodies. Initially the State system (from 1833 onwards) was gradually brought in to supplement rather than to supplant what already existed. Hence the 'dual system'. The State built schools where the Church was not already providing them, and it was only by a slow process that the State, with the revenue of taxation behind it, came to possess schools and school buildings that were better than the older Church foundations.

When one considers the violent antipathies provoked in France, Germany, and Italy by the mere existence of any education in which the Church had a hand, the moderation and capacity for compromise of the English people seems striking. Indeed, Anglicans and Roman Catholics shared their concern for 'Sunday schools for all denominations' and worked together in non-denominational schools.<sup>1</sup> Not that there were no secularists in England

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<sup>1</sup>cf. Holmes, J.D. (1978), More Roman than Rome, Burns & Oates, p.205. Connelly, G. (1984), 'The Transubstantiation of a Myth', Journal of Ecclesiastical History vol. 35, no.1, pp.78-104.

anxious to exclude all religious education from the minds of the young. But in England in the nineteenth century the secularisers were sufficiently weak in numbers and voice for the central controversy to be not whether there should be religious education but whether those who were concerned to provide it could reconcile their differences.<sup>2</sup>

The dual system was a compromise with great pragmatic virtues, even if it did not and does not leave everyone completely happy with the result. Its consequences continue to the present day. It is worth recalling a penetrating comment written in 1939 by one of the most critical minds in the Church of England at that time:

‘The Dual System, as it now exists, obstructs the complete triumph of the secularising tendency. It affirms an educational ideal which is larger in range, more intelligently sympathetic in temper, more congruous with human nature, than that which secularism embodies. It is a rallying point, to which all the higher factors in the community can gather, and by means of which they can affect more or less directly the whole educational process.’ Herbert Hensley Henson, (1939)The Church of England, Cambridge University Press, p.204.

The words come from the trenchant pen of the man who served for nearly twenty years as Bishop of Durham (1920-39), writing in the period leading up to the Butler Education Act of 1944. He was noting the chief educational justifications advocated by supporters of the dual system, whereby Church schools operate in parallel to state-maintained schools at both primary and

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<sup>2</sup>These differences are analyzed in Cruickshank, M., (1963), Church and State in English Education, Macmillan, London, (p.4f). She continues: ‘Despite their differences, denominationalists were united in their belief that religious and secular education were inseparable, united also in their faith in the philanthropic and personal value of voluntary work and in their distrust of the bureaucratic powers of the State’ (p.7).

secondary level<sup>3</sup>, even if he himself questioned its value.

It would be wrong to suppose that the Church's role and influence in education is something to be taken for granted and accepted without question. The historical legacy of Christian commitment to education does not ensure the Church automatically has a permanent role in the education of the future; nor perhaps should it. Just as Church leaders (particularly Anglican and Roman Catholic) have had to justify their endorsement of Church schools in the past, so also their successors need both to face squarely the often vociferous arguments put forward by those (like the Socialist Educational Association) who strongly oppose the so-called 'privilege' and 'divisiveness' created by specifically Christian schools. They also have to address more recent issues such as the position of ethnic minorities and multi-cultural education, examined for example in the Swann Report 1985 (chapter 8). Nevertheless it is of some importance to look back on the arguments exchanged in the debate leading up to the 1944 Act and to observe that the fundamental questions remain remarkably unchanged.

The Church of England (as medieval Lollards complained)<sup>4</sup> has been both a social and religious body, identified by government and by society at large as possessing responsibilities and corresponding privileges which mark it out

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<sup>3</sup>The sentiments quoted would not be far removed from more recent thinking among Anglican educationists, as may be seen in a statement from the National Society (Church of England) for Promoting Religious Education, endorsed by the General Synod in 1985, A Future in Partnership, 1984, p.40f.

<sup>4</sup>The texts in Anne Hudson's Wycliffite Writings (1978, C.U.P.) show how many such attitudes antedate the 16th century upheaval.

from other groups in England. The actions of Henry VIII and the Reformation did not alter that; but they narrowed the number of citizens for whom the reformed Church of England represented the 'ecclesia catholica', excluding those who, whether as Roman Catholics or as Puritan Dissenters, rejected the role played by the Crown and Parliament in determining the character of the national Church. The royal ecclesiastical supremacy, which in the sixteenth century marked out the Church of England from Christians who looked towards Rome for the preservation of the authentic tradition, paradoxically became the conserving force which upheld the episcopal succession and the Book of Common Prayer and Ordinal against the Puritan Dissenters for whom the liturgy and episcopal order were irredeemably Catholic. The phrase 'The Church of England' thereby became narrower and more specific. Similarly the Established Church's view of Anglican schools, as central to the education of the nation, has long been qualitatively different from that of other ecclesial bodies. On the one side, Protestant Nonconformists have historically been opposed to Church schools on the principle that denominational education should not be supported by the nation's rates. On the other side, Roman Catholics have vigorously defended their own schools to ensure the security and survival of their minority interests in a society which (in consequence of the papal excommunication of Elizabeth I in 1570) long identified Roman Catholicism with too faint loyalty to the Crown. Against this background the debate leading up to the 1944 Act was bound to be stormy.

## 2. Prior to 1944

### a). Early Developments in Education

To understand the differing perspectives of those debating the enactment of such momentous legislation, it is important to consider the position as it was

prior to 1944. The aims of any national system of education have rarely achieved wholehearted consensus at any time, the post-Reformation period being no exception. The very idea of 'education for all' triggered horrifying visions of violent revolution and usurpation of power. Herbert Hensley Henson commented:

'The ignorance of the masses was thought by the ruling class to be the best protection of society against the destructive idealism of minds which had been so far enfranchised by knowledge as to feel hardship and to resent oppression.' (ibid. p.189).

At the same time the only guarantee of moral order and social stability seemed to be the inculcation of Christian values: how else were people to learn to distinguish right from wrong, law from lawlessness, good from evil?<sup>5</sup> The very survival of human society is involved in respect for such precepts as those of the Decalogue forbidding murder, adultery, and theft. Religious foundations had long been in the business of educating the elite. But it was not effectively until the nineteenth century that education for the people at large came to be offered by other than charity schools.<sup>6</sup> With the creation of the National Society in 1811 and the British and Foreign School Society in 1814, the Church of England and the Dissenting bodies respectively took substantial steps forward in encouraging the country to take seriously the education of all its people. The 1832 Reform Act extended the popular franchise and thereby added weight to the argument that an educated society was less dangerous than

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<sup>5</sup>A view not dissimilar from those expressed by more recent Conservative government spokesmen (e.g. Kenneth Baker in the Times 1st February 1988 'In the Moral Dimension', and John Patten on 5th March 1993)

<sup>6</sup>Jones, M., (1938) The Charity School Movement C.U.P.; Unwin, R.W., (1984) Charity Schools and the defence of Anglicanism, University of York, Borthwick Paper 65, elucidates the work of James Talbot (author of The Christian Schoolmaster, 1707).



an illiterate one. The State offered the first grant towards school building costs to the two societies in 1833; it no longer seemed satisfactory that so major a task as education should be left to religious and charitable foundations.

Even in the nineteenth century, the problems raised when the only available school was of the Church of England were noted by the Parliamentary Select Committee of 1818. The committee envisaged places with two schools, one for children of the established Church, a second for 'children of all sorts'. But in places where only one school could be supported, regulations which excluded Dissenters must deprive the dissenting poor of all means of education. The committee, however, thought it saw a solution.

'Your Committee, however, have the greatest satisfaction in observing that in many schools where the national system is adopted, an increasing degree of liberality prevails, and that the Church catechism is only taught, and attendance at the established place of public worship only required, of those whose parents belong to the Establishment; due assurance being obtained that the children of sectaries shall learn the principles and attend the ordinances of religion according to doctrines and forms to which their families are attached'. (quoted in Maclure, J.S. (1979) Educational Documents, Methuen p.19f)

Such tolerant arrangements clearly impressed the Select Committee to such an extent that, in their recommendations 'for promoting universal education', they advocated capital grants in areas 'where the poor are manifestly without adequate means of instruction', with the proviso that links to the Parish School system should be retained. As long as children of Dissenters were provided for in the way here envisaged, such arrangements seemed to be 'the safest path by which the legislature can hope to obtain the desirable objects of security to the Establishment on the one hand, and justice

to the Dissenters on the other' (ibid. p.21).

Such optimism seemed misplaced. As Cruickshank observed, 'the Dissenters were never reconciled to the Anglican monopoly of the village schools and right into the twentieth century they had good cause to regard it as the most humiliating of their injustices' (op. cit. p.10).<sup>7</sup> Roman Catholics were as anxious as Protestant dissenters that factory children should not be given non-denominational education supervised by the Church of England using the Authorised Version of the Bible which they considered far from neutral.<sup>8</sup>

The State continued to improve educational provision throughout the nineteenth century, e.g. raising teachers' qualifications and increasing building grants. In 1847 the Privy Council Committee also proposed to encourage more lay participation in school management, thereby limiting clerical control in schools. The Wesleyans accepted this without demur. The Roman Catholics (desperate to claim building grants to provide Catholic schools to educate the influx of Irish immigrants) agreed, since their laymen were under episcopal authority and offered no threat to Church control of

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<sup>7</sup>cf. also Halevy, E. (1951), History of the English People V p.166: Anglican schools were built 'with the squire's money and taught with the parson's catechism.'

<sup>8</sup>Roman Catholic bishops were prepared to jeopardize government grants for Catholic schools rather than meet the State's wish to have the Authorised Version used in Catholic classrooms: Murphy, J. (1971), Church, State and Schools in Britain 1800-1970, London, RKP p.14. For half a century before 1611 Catholics had conducted a running battle against Protestant translations, especially the much used Geneva Bible of which William Fulke composed a notable Defence (1583, reprinted 1843). Catholics were offended, for example, when in Luke 1.30 'full of grace' became 'highly favoured', and when terms like 'priest' and 'sacrament' were avoided.

their schools.<sup>9</sup> Anglicans, on the other hand, never consented even when the measures were imposed. The Tractarians, especially Archdeacon Denison, insisted that the National Society should not submit to creeping Erastianism. When the government in the 1850s, however, attempted to give parents the right to withdraw their children from all religious instruction on grounds of conscience, both Anglicans and Dissenters were united in opposition. Robert Lowe's code of 1861 advocating payment by results was also condemned by all denominations as a deliberate policy of secularization and curriculum control. The Newcastle Commission of 1861 nevertheless recognised the essential role of Church voluntary schools in government policy to extend elementary education to all social classes.

While universal education was recognised as desirable, its scope was limited.<sup>10</sup> At that time ideas of compulsory education were viewed sceptically. Not only could such a possibility give rise to religious and political objections, but the Newcastle Commission considered that education was advancing successfully without it (Chapter 6, p.300).

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<sup>9</sup>See Reports of the Catholic Poor School Committee 1849 (pp.121-139) and 1850 (pp. 72-89) Appendix K.

<sup>10</sup>How limited can be seen in the Duke of Newcastle's Report:

'With a view to the real interests of the peasant boy...we must make up our minds to see the last of him, as far as the day school is concerned, at 10 or 11.' Once he can 'read a common narrative', 'knows enough of ciphering to make out or test the correctness of a common shop bill', and has sufficient recollection of Holy Scripture and catechism 'to know what are the duties required of him towards his Maker and his fellow man', he will have had sufficient elementary education. (Chapter 4, p.243)

b). The 1870 Education Act

By 1870, the government was convinced that more direct intervention could not be deferred. As Gladstone was preoccupied with the Irish question, the Education Bill was entrusted to Thomas Arnold's son-in-law William Edward Forster (1818-86, a former member of the Society of Friends until he married Arnold's daughter). He persuasively argued in Parliament not so much for the justice of elementary education as for its utility for the country: 'Upon the speedy provision of elementary education depends our industrial prosperity'.

To bring about the improvement necessary for commercial success, the Forster Act established school boards based in local districts, which were empowered to set up board schools in areas where elementary education was insufficient and encouraged to provide schooling for children aged 5 to 13. Although school fees were not abolished, the boards could set up special free schools and provide needy families (unable to afford ninepence a week for fees) with free tickets for schooling. The principle of educational support from local rates and central government grant was established.

The changes made by the Forster Act were far-reaching. But the passing of the Act ultimately hinged on agreement concerning the religious issue. The proposals for maintaining secular efficiency through inspection were readily accepted, and a conscience clause enabled parents to withdraw their children from religious instruction. But it remained a question what kind of religious instruction would be generally acceptable in rate-aided board schools? Though the consequences of the constitutional changes of 1828-32, with Roman Catholic Emancipation and the Reform Act, were slow to penetrate the

Victorian mind, it was becoming gradually more evident that in religion, and eventually in matters of morality other than theft, murder, sex and, marriage, the stance of government was neutral. The Protestant Nonconformists were forceful and persuasive in advocating free, compulsory, rate-supported non-denominational elementary schooling: they took it for granted that what was non-denominational was sure to be Protestant in its general standpoint, this latter view being shared by Roman Catholics. Having accepted that he was not likely to gain acceptance for a fully state controlled educational system where denominational teaching was left to local discretion (as in Scotland), Gladstone's problem was to find a way of securing national agreement on a non-denominational religious instruction. At the same time the Established Church would feel understandable grievance at having to provide substantial funds to maintain its own parish schools if it were hindered from teaching the Prayer Book catechism in them, while the Protestant Dissenters were adamant that no state aid could be given to parish schools where denominational instruction was the norm.

The final compromise was enshrined in the clause put forward by William Francis Cowper-Temple (1811-88). This laid down that in schools 'hereafter established by means of local rates, no catechism or religious formulary which is distinctive of any particular denomination shall be taught'. This was agreed, or rather submitted to, only after fierce opposition and acrimonious debate; one amendment alone was debated in Parliament for four consecutive nights. It was in any event a compromise tending to gloss over fundamental differences of approach between the Church of England and the Dissenting bodies, not only in theology but in political and social

tradition.<sup>11</sup> The effect of the Cowper-Temple clause was to limit religious instruction in all state-funded schools to Bible stories, not all of which, without the gloss of later Christian interpretation, were necessarily edifying, nor productive of the kind of morality which would help the government to keep down the crime rate. The clause implied a divorce of the Bible from the living community of faith. Disraeli even feared that schoolmasters responsible for interpreting the scriptures would become 'a new sacerdotal class'.<sup>12</sup>

There was a further difference between the Church of England and the Dissenting bodies such as the Baptists. The Anglicans accept infant baptism, and think of the Christian nurture of the child as a long process of character training. Much Anglican religious instruction in schools tended to presuppose that the children came from homes with a Christian affiliation and allegiance, and did not present the young with urgent exhortations to a conversion experience. By contrast, some of the Dissenting bodies, having a darker conception of the effects of original sin in producing 'total depravity' in unredeemed human nature, had less interest in transformist understandings of the operations of divine grace, and sought rather to invite the child, often in early adolescence, to accept salvation through a personal and conscious act of commitment. Catechism was accordingly less significant for the

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<sup>11</sup>In addition, there was the real difficulty that it is hard to identify any statement of Christian faith which is not, in the last analysis, at least characteristic, and in some degree distinctive, of a particular ecclesial ethos. (e.g. The Lima 'Baptism Eucharist & Ministry' (1982), though composed by Protestants, has been felt alarmingly Catholic by some.) None of the classical Christian creeds could be acceptable to a Unitarian.

<sup>12</sup>Hansard 3rd Series vol. ccii, col. 289

Nonconformist bodies.

The Dissenters fought hard for the Cowper-Temple clause. They had long felt that any specific catechetical instruction should be left to the minister on Sundays, not brought into the nation's classrooms on weekdays. If the clause left nothing to religious instruction other than the Bible alone, they above all knew that the Bible only was the religion of Protestants and a book which an individual Protestant claimed to be at liberty to interpret as he or she willed, altogether apart from the 'tradition' of the community of faith. The clause could be accepted as enshrining the principle of religious freedom. If it was impossible for the State to take all voluntary schools under its direct control,<sup>13</sup> then the government must ensure religious freedom in its own schools.

By long tradition, Dissenters tended to be drawn from the lower middle classes,<sup>14</sup> and were Whig in politics. The Established Church retained the loyalty of the ruling classes in society and was for the most part Tory. This political division did not assist the formation of a common mind. The Dissenters resented their exclusion from admission to Oxford and from

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<sup>13</sup>Non-denominational elementary schooling was effectively advocated in the run-up to the 1870 Education Act, especially by the Education League founded in Birmingham (a city with a powerful Methodist and Unitarian presence, and with a famous Congregationalist chapel at Carrs Lane). With substantial financial backing, the League held two hundred public meetings and issued a quarter of a million publications. The radical Birmingham politician, Joseph Chamberlain even suggested that Nonconformists should withdraw their support for the Liberal government which condoned sectarianism (Boyd, C.W. (ed.) 1914 Mr. Chamberlain's Speeches 1 pp.13f).

<sup>14</sup>The Congregationalist said that 'plain people of low education and vulgar taste...constitute...nine parts in ten of most of our congregations' (1730); cited by Michael Watts, (1978) The Dissenters, O.U.P. p.383.

graduation at Cambridge: until the year 1871, subscription to the Thirty-nine Articles was a condition for obtaining a degree at Oxford or Cambridge. Nonconformists had to look elsewhere for higher education, to Scotland, or the Netherlands, or to their own dissenting academies which were established by the Presbyterians and Congregationalists. The dissenting academies tended to allow greater room for diversity of opinion and in some cases encouraged the Enlightenment spirit of free inquiry. In philosophy John Locke was their model; in theology Socinianism was never far away<sup>15</sup>. The Presbyterianism of the 17th century rid itself of orthodox strictness and by 1730 was moving into Arianism and Unitarianism. If the spirit of the Reformation was, or became by 1600, the exaltation of private judgement and liberty, then congregations could hardly assert the right to impose creeds on ministers.

The Methodists stood apart from the older Dissenters; John Wesley had found equally uncongenial the Calvinism of many Congregationalists and the rationalistic Socinianism current among the Presbyterians of his time. Moreover, the older Dissenting bodies and the Methodist societies had very different forms of organisation, the Wesleyan tradition being far more autocratic and authoritarian. Nevertheless, the Methodists after their separation from the Church of England found themselves willy nilly adopting dissenting attitudes, consequent on their rejection of the principle that the Church of England is the Church of the nation. On the question of the Cowper-Temple clause therefore, the Methodists joined forces with the other Protestant Nonconformist bodies, although they were also relieved when the

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<sup>15</sup>In some Dissenting minds the doctrine of the Trinity was mere ecclesiastical tradition without foundation in Scripture alone, at least since Richard Bentley in 1715 had demonstrated 1 John 5.7-8 (the heavenly witnesses) to be a spurious interpolation.



1870 Act allowed state capital grants for their denominational schools.

The Church of England inherited a deep sense of responsibility for education at all stages from parish school through to the university, with a duty to ensure that Christian doctrines and moral values flowed in the life-blood of the nation. The bishops of the Church of England retained their very ancient, pre-Reformation position in the House of the Lords. Yet within the Church of England, among the liberal and evangelical groups, there could also be supporters of the view that religious education need not include the catechism<sup>16</sup>. At the time when Parliament was carrying through a constitutional revolution utterly transforming the alliance of Church and State in England, Thomas Arnold in 1833 published his Principles of Church Reform, arguing for a retention of the identification of the liberal State with a liberally interpreted Church of England. Arnold at Rugby saw his task as educating children to serve God in both Church and State, the Christian school being directed towards the public service of the body politic.<sup>17</sup> In the nineteenth century there were Anglican minds who could find it possible to come to terms with the Cowper-Temple clause, because they thought that it

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<sup>16</sup>Troublesome to liberals because of the sentence 'The Body and Blood of Christ are verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful in the Lord's supper'.

<sup>17</sup>More than a century later, comparable ideas appear in William Temple's Christianity and the Social Order:

'The explicit Christian teaching and worship of the school should be the focus of a school's own sense of community and its service to the wider community in which it is set'. (1942, Penguin p.93.)

In 1939 the more sceptical Herbert Hensley Henson wrote:

'The immemorial association of the clergy with the education of the people, and the dominance of religion in the scheme of sound education, have persisted in Anglican minds long after they have been abandoned by the State, the one as impracticable and the other as irrational'. (op. cit. (1939) p.192)

was a historic obligation for the Church of England to reflect the religious attitudes of Englishmen, especially as expressed through Parliament, inheritor of the royal ecclesiastical supremacy asserted by Henry VIII. More conservative Anglicans concentrated on lobbying for rate-aid for denominational schools and against the conscience clause.<sup>18</sup>

Meanwhile, the Roman Catholics, though pre-occupied with developments at the first Vatican Council (1870), were keen to safeguard their own concerns. While the Anglicans emphasized the education of the English nation as a whole, the Roman Catholics were insistent that their parents should have the right to Catholic education for their children.<sup>19</sup> Archbishop, later Cardinal, Manning was keen to extend this principle to all. But he also warned Gladstone

‘that integrity of our schools as to i) Doctrine, ii) religious management, and the responsibility of the Bishops in these respects, cannot be touched without opening a multitude of contentions and vexations.’<sup>20</sup>

Their main concern as a minority was a fair share of government capital and maintenance grants for their schools, particularly as the social deprivation

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<sup>18</sup>Among Anglicans there was disagreement. Contrast the position of Canon Gregory, treasurer of the National Society, who was elected to the London Board in 1873 and there used his influence to support denominational education and to restrict the expansion of Board Schools, with that of Dr Frazer, Bishop of Manchester, who was prepared to transfer his Church schools to the State (Cruickshank, (1963) op. cit. p.46 f.)

<sup>19</sup> Manning wrote to Gladstone from Rome: ‘I fear we shall be compelled as in America to form our own schools’. Purcell, E.S. (1973) Life of Manning, 11, 493. ‘Let every sect, even the Huxleyites, have their grant if they fulfil the conditions’ (Morley, J., (1905) Life of Gladstone, II p.308).

<sup>20</sup>Cited in McClelland, V.C. ‘Sensus Fidelium: the developing concept of Roman Catholic voluntary effort in education in England and Wales’, in Tulasiewicz, W. and Brock, C. (eds) (1988), Christianity and Educational provision in international perspective London, RKP, p.67.

of many Catholic communities, arising from Irish immigration after the famine of 1846-48, made any expectation of voluntary contributions for schools unrealistic. The principle that 'religion pervades all aspects of Catholic education' was very different from the State's policy of demarcating secular from religious instruction, and reinforced the claim for distinctive Catholic schools. They were apprehensive about the establishment of School Boards over which they had no control and yet on which (under section 75 of the 1870 Act) they were dependent to pay the fees of poor children otherwise unable to attend Catholic schools - a responsibility taken over by the Poor Law Guardians in 1876. The bishops' suspicion that board schools were Protestant institutions was hardly lessened by the Church of England's willingness to transfer more than 600 schools to Board control by 1884.

The Forster Bill was finally enacted on 9 August 1870, but only with the support of the Conservative opposition. The compromise of the dual system papered over the cracks of a society divided by sectarianism and religious defensiveness. It meant that Church and State were to operate parallel if not rival educational systems, distinctive in their religious teaching and their management structure even to the present day. Yet the Cowper-Temple clause, at all stages controversial, survived through successive attempts at educational legislation to be incorporated even into the 1944 Butler Act and the 1988 Education Reform Act.

c). The 1902 Education Act and its aftermath

The period between 1870 and 1902 saw repeated attempts to improve the financial position of Church schools, especially since the State was now providing substantial support for its board schools. Anglicans and Roman

Catholics, united in the Voluntary Schools Association of 1884, lobbied both for increased grant and for the abolition of rates paid by voluntary schools to support board schools. (The objection that State aid would mean State interference came only from anti-Erastian high Anglicans.) The 1888 majority report of the Cross Commission supported their cause, but united the Nonconformists in opposition. While Roman Catholics campaigned for local-rate aid, Anglicans were divided whether State or local aid was preferable. At the same time both communions were losing well-qualified teachers trained in Church training colleges to better equipped State schools.<sup>21</sup> The 1891 Education Act providing free elementary education merely created additional costs and exacerbated the widening gulf between voluntary and State provision.

By 1902 the position of voluntary Church schools, guaranteed under the 1870 Act, had become untenable. They were educating half the nation, yet the state of most of the schools was appalling and the government had no choice but to intervene.<sup>22</sup> Once the initial surge of financial support for Church schools following the 1870 Act had subsided, the 50% capital grant permitted from the Education Department after 1870 had become plainly inadequate, and the notable success of the rival board schools particularly in urban areas highlighted the deficiencies still further. Arthur James Balfour, introducing

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<sup>21</sup>The Catholic teachers who moved out of Catholic schools were even threatened with excommunication. They formed their own association in 1892, but were almost defenceless against the sanctions which bishops could enforce. See Selby, D.E., 'The Catholic Teacher Crisis 1885-1902 in The Durham and Newcastle Review, 37, Autumn 1976, pp.33-47. In Northern Ireland in 1992, the power of episcopal sanction remains evident (below, Chapter VI).

<sup>22</sup>£5m in voluntary subscriptions enabled 1,726 applications for building grants to be approved by 1876.

his Education Bill in the House of Commons in March 1902, commented that, while board schools were administered by school boards, voluntary schools were isolated and unconnected in their organisation. Moreover they lacked resources.

‘The fact remains that after all their great efforts on the part of the voluntary subscriber and after all the aid given from the National Exchequer, the voluntary schools are in many cases not adequately equipped and not as well fitted as they should be to carry out the great part which they are inevitably destined to play in our system of national education.’ (Hansard, 4th Series vol. cv, cols. 854-5)

Balfour’s Unionist Alliance categorically reaffirmed the government’s commitment to the voluntary sector as a partner in the expanding educational service, and it is instructive to observe that he allowed no room for manoeuvre to those who wished for the abolition of the dual system. Retaining the balance of denominational and non-denominational education, he insisted that government support was not to be merely financial in providing 50% capital grant. The 1902 Act ensured that the new local education authorities supporting Church schools with local rate-aid, would appoint one third of the managers to voluntary schools, and His Majesty’s Inspectors would have right of inspection to oversee standards in all schools; most importantly, all teachers were to be paid out of the public purse.

The consequences of such legislation brought into high profile the difficulties of government action in this delicate area. For the first time local authorities were to have a direct say in the organisation of the voluntary sector, a move accepted by both Anglicans and Roman Catholics as inevitable because of the

impoverished condition of many Church schools<sup>23</sup>. This change might have been considered by those opposed to a dual system as a move in the right direction, or at least as the half loaf which is better than no bread, since it meant that Church Schools were set on a path by which one day they might be wholly subsumed within the State system.<sup>24</sup> However, the cost to the ratepayer of supporting the voluntary sector caused an outcry of such proportions that it nearly brought down the government.

The impassioned opposition is surprising in view of the fact that the State had been giving Church schools central financial support for 70 years already. Yet the prospect of the common man's local rates being gathered and allocated to maintain denominational schools, from which on grounds of conscience his children were withdrawn, lit the blue touch-paper. The Protestant Nonconformists, led by the famous Baptist minister John Clifford (1836-1923) of Westbourne Park chapel, rallied to the cry of 'Rome on the rates',<sup>25</sup> and his virulent pamphlets against the Bill sold in thousands. Protest meetings were held all over the country: sixteen special trains were needed to bring Dissenters to one in Yorkshire on 20 September 1902.

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<sup>23</sup>The 1902 Act 'saved the voluntary system just as it approached breaking point; however it accepted the effective separation of religious and secular education'. (Platten, S.G. (1975) British Journal of Educational Studies, vol. 23, no.3.)

<sup>24</sup>A fear earlier expressed by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Benson, in 1893, since such state control might 'unchurch the Church schools' (The Guardian 31 May). This concern was more recently echoed by both Anglican and Roman Catholic spokesmen as a consequence of the legislation in 1988 and 1993.

<sup>25</sup>Cruickshank, M., (op.cit. p81) points out that, although Cardinal Vaughan as Archbishop of Westminster welcomed Balfour's proposals as a 'step in the right direction', it was actually the Anglicans with ten times more schools than the Roman Catholics who would benefit most from the Bill.

Lord Roseberry presided over a rally at the Queen's Hall at which Lloyd George said of the Bill that 'it was originated by a wily Tory Cardinal, promoted by State clergy, who accepted Protestant pay for propagating Catholic doctrines' (quoted in A.Clegg (1980) About our Schools, Blackwell p.166). With feelings running high and liberal politicians bidding for the Protestant Nonconformist vote, it was not surprising that the parliamentary debate lasted 57 days.<sup>26</sup>

After the legalisation put forward by Balfour was passed in 1902, thousands of Nonconformists refused to pay their local rates, remaining adamant in their opposition regardless of personal cost. A fierce puritan austerity surfaced. Thus, on their election to power and in response to their constituents, the new Liberal government of 1906 introduced a Bill to abolish the dual system.

But now the bishops rallied to defend their cause. The nation's children were in danger of losing altogether their heritage of an education formed by the noble cadences and scriptural doctrine of the English Prayer Book. Charles Gore, the Tractarian bishop lately translated from Worcester to found the new diocese of Birmingham (1905), wrote in a letter:

'Loyalty to those who have gone before us and the sense of our great duty to the children of Church parents have impelled us to make great sacrifices that we might secure for such children instruction in the faith their parents hold' (cited by Henson H.H., (1939) op. cit. p.203).

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<sup>26</sup>R.A. Butler noted that 'Winston Churchill was stunned by the virulence of the debates, horrified to see that an educational dispute charged with religious issues could so split the nation that the Conservative Party lost the next election'. (1982 The Art of Memory, Hodder and Stoughton p.148.) After this, there can be no cause for surprise that Churchill was hesitant about a new Education Bill in the war years of 1940-44.

Bishop Knox of Manchester, on the Evangelical side, told an audience of supporters:

‘Your tea, your sugar, your beer and your incomes are to be taxed that the children of the Church may be robbed of their Church education and that your schools, built by your own free contributions, may be useless for your own requirements’ (quoted in Butler, R.A. (1982), op. cit. p.149.)

After the furore of Nonconformist anger directed against the 1902 Act and considering the skill with which Augustine Birrell, the new President of the Board of Education, presented the Nonconformist and Liberal government case in 1906, it is surprising that the Liberal government’s Bill suffered defeat.<sup>27</sup> Randall Davidson, the Archbishop of Canterbury, invariably spoke with great moderation on behalf of Church schools, and clearly discerned the confusions of thought among their opponents. The support for the Liberal Bill was an alliance of incompatibles, partly of atheist secularists imbibing the spirit of the French Revolution and anxious to be rid of all religion as superstition, partly of pious Nonconformists content with the Bible only or even preferring to have no religion taught at all rather than to allow the Prayer Book catechism to be taught in any school in receipt of ratepayers’ money.

Augustine Birrell himself had great admiration for Roman Catholics, Jews and High Anglicans and did his ‘best to secure their position and entitle them to State aid’ (Birrell, A., 1937, op. cit. p.189). He wanted compromise, advocating the abolition of religious tests for teachers and a state religious education confined to the Deist propositions of the Fatherhood of God, the

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<sup>27</sup>Birrell recalled: ‘Never have I drawn my breath in so irreligious and ignorant an atmosphere as that of the House of Commons when debating religion’. (Birrell, A., (1937) Things Past Redress, London, Faber, p. 188.)



responsibility of man, and the immortality of the soul, but excluding contentious matters of revealed theology. The newly established Catholic Education Council of 1906 reiterated the view of the Roman Catholic bishops that parents had the right to religious education of their own denomination and that undenominational teaching was by definition Protestant. Archbishop Davidson powerfully pointed to the absurdity that a Liberal government should be denying parents the right to obtain for their children instruction in their faith within the school framework, and, moreover, should be encouraging the appointment of R.E. teachers without any belief in what they were talking about. He also urged<sup>28</sup> the injustice inherent in taking 14000 schools by confiscation and demolishing their trusts by radical secularisation, against which the sole safeguards offered by the government were the 'pious hope' of the Education Minister Birrell that nothing so drastic would happen on any great scale and that denominational 'facilities' might be available if three quarters of the parents required them.

The reasonableness with which Davidson argued the Church's case persuaded the House of Lords, with the consequence that the original issue of religious education became submerged in a greater battle for power<sup>29</sup> between the Commons and the Lords; even the King pleaded for compromise rather than conflict. The Bill finally fell when the Liberal government, having made considerable concessions, refused to concede freedom to a qualified teacher to give any religious instruction in a rate-supported school (which was to mean

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<sup>28</sup>Hansard, 4th Series vol. clxii, col. 934

<sup>29</sup>Bell, G.K.A., (1952) Randall Davidson, O.U.P. (3rd Edition) p.524. The battle was exacerbated by Balfour, now in opposition, who 'blocked all the roads that might have led to a settlement' (Birrell, A., op. cit. p.191).

any school other than the independent school) if that instruction had content distinctive of 'denominational' Christianity.

Under Birrell's successors in the presidency of the Board of Education, McKenna and the more effective Runciman, strenuous efforts were made in 1908 to achieve a compromise called a 'concordat.' Bishop Knox of Manchester however described it as 'the peace of death' (Church Times 27th November) and declared himself opposed to any compromise against the diplomatic negotiations skilfully (in Knox's view, too skilfully) conducted by Davidson. Davidson came within an ace of persuading the Liberal government to agree to allow 'denominational' teaching in every elementary school in the country, and succeeded in winning the concurrence of leading Nonconformists. But the bitter language of 1906 had fouled the nest; the Nonconformists became concerned at the financial benefits offered to Church schools and Anglicans and Roman Catholics both feared that their own schools would become isolated from the national system (Hansard, 4th series. vol. cxcvii, cols. 1158,1163.) There was evidence that the Board of Education might impede denominational provision by 1907 regulations which gave larger grants to undenominational schools and attempted to influence Church training colleges. The emergence of further disagreements among the Anglican leaders (e.g. in the Representative Church Council) enabled the government to withdraw a revised Bill which would have satisfied the Archbishop of Canterbury but not the firebrand Bishop of Manchester. Cruickshank regarded Birrell's Bill as 'unquestionably the great missed opportunity of the twentieth century' (op. cit. p.103) for ameliorating the religious disputes in education, which continue to dog the footsteps of government ministers up to the present day. Nevertheless, the dual system

has survived into the 1990s.

### 3. The 1944 Education Act

One cannot consider the parliamentary debates of 1906-08 without wondering what created the profound change of climate under which agreement was possible in 1944. How had feelings so come to be modified that the government came to welcome the role of Church schools in the national scheme of education, and that religious education was accepted as an essential element in the nation's investment for the future? Perhaps even more surprising is that in the last quarter of the present century the fundamentals of the 1944 legislation remained the basis of State educational policy in England and Wales, confirmed in the 1988 Education Reform Act. What had contributed to the dissipation of earlier bitterness and anger?

The achievement of Archbishop Davidson in 1908 in gaining calm understanding and concurrence from Protestant Nonconformist leaders may be taken to show that in a different atmosphere agreement was possible. Perhaps by 1908 some of the more moderate Nonconformists had come to realise that, if they were not very careful, they were going to get what they had been asking for, and that it looked uncomfortably like a 'sell-out' to the militant secularists. The Anglicans had also appeared more accommodating during the 1918 Fisher Bill which, apart from planning to expand secondary and higher education opportunities, hoped to remove the divisiveness of the dual system. But again vociferous opposition throughout 1920 from Roman Catholics and Nonconformists forced the government to drop the proposals.

Following the Hadow reorganisation, the 1936 Education Act had allowed local

authorities to contribute 50-75% of the capital costs for new Church secondary schools and had created a category of 'Special Agreement' schools whereby all teachers could be deemed 'reserved' and therefore appointed by denominational governors. Nevertheless the position of Church schools was far from secured, as the financial demands incurred by secondary school expansion proved increasingly unrealistic.

Then during the Second World War the threat of Nazism to the survival of Britain and the general crisis of humanity helped to concentrate the mind of the nation on its values, to which its Christian past was far from irrelevant. What were people fighting to preserve? The patriotic answer 'Britain' presupposed something further, namely the kind of freedom and mutual respect which the English religious tradition had a hand in forming. Accordingly in 1944 public discussion of educational policy in the future could not plausibly marginalise religious values. For many, no doubt Christianity was the folk religion of social custom, a part of the British heritage.<sup>30</sup> Secularism and materialism seemed an inadequate basis for the values and virtues required to deal with such external threats. Many people in Britain felt that Christianity had been a major contributor to the liberal legal and political institutions of democracy in the form they understood it. At least for the Church of England mind, a centralised autocracy and dictatorship seemed repellant.

The White Paper of 1943 recorded the fact that a serious respect for the

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<sup>30</sup>A view not dissimilar from those expressed in the 1987-8 debates e.g. Baroness Cox: 'All we are trying to do is ensure that our children have the opportunity to become familiar with the Christian heritage of our country' (Hansard 16 May 1988 House of Lords col. 13)

values which could be inculcated by good religious education was widespread in British society:

‘There has been a very general wish, not confined to representatives of the Churches, that religious education should be given a more defined place in the life and work of the schools, springing from a desire to revive the spiritual and personal values in our society in our national tradition’ (Educational Reconstruction, Cmnd 6548, 1943 III p.36.)

Similar views were expressed in The Times leader of 17 January 1940:

‘More than ever before it has become clear that the healthy life of a nation must be based on spiritual principles... Christianity... is not a philosophy but a historic religion which must dwindle unless the facts on which it is founded are taught, and such teaching made the centre of our educational system... Education with religion omitted is not really education at all’.<sup>31</sup>

These sentiments were not altogether dissimilar from those being expressed by some Anglican Church leaders of the time. In 1939 the ever candid Herbert Hensley had written:

‘With characteristic lack of logic, the English people have hitherto refused to adopt the naked secularisation of the national system which democratic principle appears to require... total absence of moral and religious teaching from the school curriculum is not thought by many eminent educational authorities consistent with the requirements of efficient education’ (op. cit. p.197).

Never himself an enthusiast for the dual system, Henson was confident that if all education was entrusted to state schools, Christian teaching within the constraints of the Cowper-Temple clause would be effective in providing the religious education needed, with the advantage that denominational squabbles might be relegated to the lumber room of past history, and coherence in society would be increased.

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<sup>31</sup>This article, entitled ‘Religion and National Life’, had also revealed that over half the grown-up children evacuated from English towns had no idea who was born on Christmas Day. John Heenan, in his biography of Cardinal Hinsley, commented that the Cardinal was very disturbed by the article, which strengthened his resolve to defend Roman Catholic schools (p. 215-6).

Archbishop William Temple of Canterbury, however, was a forceful advocate of Church schools, (85% of which were Anglican,) while at the same time aware of the broader perspective demanded by a national system of education. Temple was conscious of the extent to which liberal democracy was dependent on Christianity. Just as the Nazis had used education to develop a sense of common purpose, so Temple realised that the British schools should

‘foster individual development on the one hand and world fellowship on the other... There is only one candidate for this double function: it is Christianity. We must then take steps to ensure that the corporate life of the schools is Christian’ (Temple, 1942, op.cit. p.93)

This degree of consensus, therefore, between national and Church spokesmen provided sufficient incentive for negotiations to begin in 1941. Discussions were accelerated by practical considerations. There was no avoiding the fact that the condition of voluntary school buildings had reached crisis point. When R.A. Butler called Archbishop Temple to the Board of Education on 5 June 1942, he presented him and the Bishop of Oxford with a horrifying catalogue of statistics, showing that 399 out of 700 condemned school buildings, on the black list prepared some twenty years previously, were Anglican schools. More than 90% of voluntary school buildings antedated the 1902 Education Act, and yet the Church authorities could scarcely afford to repair or maintain more than a few of them. William Temple took little convincing that such a situation was untenable. But he had the unenviable task of persuading other weighty figures. As he wrote to Canon Tissington-Tatlow,

‘I was doing a rather elaborate egg-dance, and some of the eggs are such as it is most important not to break, because the smell would be awful’. (Iremonger, F.A.(1948) William Temple. O.U.P. p.572)

Yet in 1943, when the White Paper on Educational Reconstruction was published, Temple boldly told his Diocesan Conference (on 25 October) that it



presented 'a glorious opportunity': he acknowledged that, in single school areas where all children had to attend their local Anglican school, the Nonconformists had a grievance that seemed justifiable; the government had recognised Anglican financial constraints and was generously offering 50% of the cost needed to bring voluntary schools up to standard. Temple was also able to take the wider view:

'Above all, let us not give the impression that our concern as church people is only with the adjustment of the dual system: we ought as Christians to be concerned about the whole of educational progress. I am quite sure that the raising of the school leaving age will of itself do more to make permanent the religious influence of the schools than anything that can be done with directly denominational purpose'. (ibid. p.573)

This broader perspective expressed an optimism not shared by all Anglicans. Some were determined that the Churches should retain control of all their denominational schools, believing that a school's religious ethos is more effective than any religious lesson: at the Church Assembly in 1942, Temple had a difficult task convincing the meeting to ratify the agreement negotiated with R.A. Butler, allowing LEAs to run Church voluntary-controlled schools. Lord Selborne (1887-1971), who combined Cabinet office with a prominent role in the Church Assembly, wrote at the time to Butler: 'After that debate I don't think Temple could possibly carry the Church in conceding anything else'.

The Nonconformists also had to be persuaded, though the issues were for them wholly different. They stood by the Cowper-Temple clause on non-denominational religious instruction in all state schools, insisting that its acceptance at primary level must be extended to all secondary schools. Their main grievance, however, remained the single school areas, where the

Church of England school was the only educational institution available to their children and, despite many meetings between the Churches over which Temple presided, no solution could be found. At the same time this disagreement was not enough to scupper the Bill, an indication that cooperation and unity were a higher priority than traditional hostilities. The advantages to be gained by the expansion of State education and the guarantees on religious worship and instruction were too great to lose. As Temple wrote to the then Moderator of the Free Church Council, Dr R.D. Whitehorn of Westminster College, Cambridge, it was important that no heated controversy should

'lead to the withdrawal of the Bill, partly because the main reforms in the Bill are so urgently needed, partly because it would vastly increase the prospect of a purely secular solution'. (ibid. p. 576)

The Church negotiators were not the only people who had to 'watch their backs'. R.A. Butler's interest in bringing about reasonable educational reforms with a safeguard for the Church's proper concerns was not an enthusiasm shared by his Prime Minister. Indeed Winston Churchill, too well remembering the debacle of 1902, vetoed a new Educational Bill in 1941, and insisted that 'we cannot have party politics in wartime'. Nevertheless Butler persisted.<sup>32</sup> In The Art of Memory<sup>33</sup> he recalled that late one night before the Bill was actually published, Churchill summoned Butler to his office, and introduced him to Lord Selborne and Lord Salisbury with

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<sup>32</sup>'Having viewed the milk and honey from the top of Pisgah, I was damned if I was going to die in the land of Moab. Basing myself on long experience of Churchill over the India Bill, I decided to disregard what he said and go straight ahead'. (1971 The Art of the Possible, Hamish Hamilton, p.95). The political gamble paid off and Butler managed to steer his Bill through.

<sup>33</sup>(1982) op.cit. p.163



the dry comment: 'I have asked you to meet your enemies in religious teaching'. To Churchill's surprise, the two Lords - both pillars of the Church of England's laity - expressed their satisfaction that Butler had done all he could for the Church.

The Roman Catholics, however, were far from happy with the Bill's proposals. The idea that the local authority would take control and fully maintain Church schools with certain safeguards for denominational religious education was unacceptable. The alternative of 'aided' status where the Church retained control but only received a 50% State grant for capital maintenance also caused anxiety, for the Church could not afford to keep up all its schools on this basis. Unlike the Anglicans, for whom the sense of boundary between Church membership and citizenship could easily become blurred, the Roman Catholics were determined to adhere to Pius XI's principle of Catholic schools for all Catholic children, set out in the Encyclical 'Divini Illius Magistri' (1929). Their rejection of the 'controlled' option may be traced back to this Encyclical which proclaimed:

'The mere fact that religious teaching is imparted in a school does not make it satisfy the rights of the Church and the family, nor render it fit to be attended by Catholic pupils. For this, the whole of the training and the teaching, the whole organisation of the school, teachers, curriculum, school books on all subjects, must be so impregnated with the Christian spirit under the guidance and motherly vigilance of the Church that religion comes to provide the foundation and culminating perfection of the whole training'.

This was a list of requirements that could only be met in the independent

sector or, assuming proper safeguards, in grant-aided schools.<sup>34</sup> The Catholic 'atmosphere' was more important than the school buildings.

When we remember that the negotiations for the 1944 legislation took place twenty years before the Second Vatican Council, at a time when the tone of that great assembly was quite unimaginable, it is perhaps not surprising to find prevailing a defensive and ghetto-like mentality. Certainly the feeling of 'minority interest' was found not only among Roman Catholics but among those who observed them from without. It is of interest that Bishop Hensley Henson, who was in favour of entrusting Anglican schools to the State, could write in 1939:

'Neither Roman Catholics nor Jews can be brought into any general system of general teaching, for both are minorities so largely alien in race and creed as to be properly accorded distinctive treatment... denominationalism must remain a feature of national education. Roman Catholic and Jewish schools are genuinely denominational institutions, for they are only provided where there is a definite denominational demand to be satisfied, and their sharply distinctive character renders them unattractive to the general body of English people'. (1939 op.cit. p.201).

If such sentiments feel irretrievably dated, that is clear evidence of the reality of the ecumenical progress made possible by Vatican II. Henson was adamant that Roman Catholics, as 'a highly specialised minority who have set a fence about themselves... cannot rightly or prudently be allowed to prohibit a recognition in the State schools of the fundamental agreement with respect to Christian faith and morals which happily exists among the people' (ibid. p.202).

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<sup>34</sup>It is interesting to note that Roman Catholic schools have an additional dimension: while some come under diocesan authority, others (both independent and grant-aided) fall under the jurisdiction of particular religious orders, many of which long predate the 'dual system'.

R.A. Butler felt much the same, and had reason to be concerned that a vociferous minority could fatally rock a very fragile boat. In an Advent pastoral letter, the then Bishop of Hexham and Newcastle wrote:

‘We shall have our Catholic schools where our Catholic children shall be educated in a Catholic atmosphere by Catholic teachers approved by a Catholic authority. We cannot surrender our schools’.

And in May 1942 the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Liverpool, Dr Downey, said:

‘We shall continue to struggle for our denominational schools even though we have to fight alone’.

In November 1942 Cardinal Hinsley, Archbishop of Westminster, wrote to The Times arguing that political parties which claimed to respect freedom of conscience and minority interests were honour-bound to accommodate the views of his Church.<sup>35</sup> The Roman Catholics owned 12% of the voluntary schools and educated 8% of the school population, but they well knew that they would have a difficult task in bringing their 6% ‘blacklisted’ schools up to the expected standard and in providing sufficient new schools to meet the growing demand.

Butler sensed that there was a weakness in their position: ‘The only chink in their armour was that some of them feared that, if they became too defiant, I might exclude them completely from the public system’. (1982, op.cit. p.153). At a difficult meeting<sup>36</sup> at Ushaw College, Durham, the Roman Catholic bishops insisted that the grant aid be raised to 75-80%. (The same request was made later by William Temple in the House of Lords). Butler

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<sup>35</sup>R.A. Butler recalled how Churchill cut this letter out, stuck it on cardboard and sent it round to him saying ‘There you are, fixed, old cock.’ (1982, op.cit. p.159).

<sup>36</sup>R.A. Butler recalls ‘that the Roman Catholic bishops made no attempt to control their supporters, believing that their anxieties justified them in encouraging a fuss’. (1971, op. cit. p.107)

realised that such concessions would alienate the Protestant Nonconformists and risk parliamentary defeat. Throughout the negotiations he was accompanied by his parliamentary Secretary in the coalition government, James Chuter Ede, a socialist and Nonconformist whose early career had been as a schoolmaster in Surrey elementary schools, and whose advice to Butler proved invaluable and invariably judicious.<sup>37</sup>

Butler found the Roman Catholics difficult to deal with. The largely shared assumptions between Anglicans and Nonconformists created a predisposition to an amicable atmosphere. This could not be presumed in negotiation with the Roman Catholics, a minority group whose long memory of persecution in England had given them an indelible feeling of being embattled with their backs to the wall, but also an instinctive hope that one day, provided they were sufficiently uncompromising, they would see the Protestants off altogether. As Butler recalled, 'The Roman Catholics still wanted to act independently. There was no question of an alliance between them and the Church of England' (1971, *op. cit.* p.101). Compromise with a secular government's plans for a common system of religious education was in Roman Catholic eyes suspect from the start, and this feeling that they must be seen to be combative affected the style of the negotiation. Of Dr Downey it was reported to Butler that he was 'ambitious not only for celestial but also for terrestrial renown. He spoke quite fairly in private but appeared, as an Irishman, to enjoy a public fight' (*ibid.* p.105). Butler felt nettled and frustrated that, having successfully dealt with bitterly opposed religious

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<sup>37</sup>James Chuter Ede (1882-1965) was given his first ministerial post by Butler; he became famous as Home Secretary (1945-51) when capital punishment was being debated, and was made a life peer a few months before his death. (see Chuter Ede's diaries 1941-45, Jeffreys, K. (ed.) 1987)

groups in India and Palestine, he should be experiencing such difficulty in England. 'What hope there is lies in getting hold of them personally and assuring them of the sincerity and sympathy of one's approach' (ibid. p. 102).

The Roman Catholics did not wish to be drawn into any consensus, and had difficulty in making their position comprehensible. Whereas in the 1880s Anglicans and Roman Catholics had found themselves united against the Nonconformists, this time the Catholics were isolated. John Heenan, later himself to become Archbishop of Westminster, wrote in 1943:

'The English hostility to Catholic education is the result less of fear than of ignorance. Cardinal Hinsley's task was made the more difficult by reason of the well-known broadmindedness of the Church of England which, for several years, had been in the habit of handing over its schools in large towns, almost on demand, to the local authority...The Cardinal found it difficult to persuade the authorities and the public that the Catholic attitude towards education is not fanatical'. (1944, op. cit. p.132 )

Against such a background it was a remarkable gesture when Cardinal Griffin, the new Archbishop of Westminster, attended the second reading of the Bill and presented Butler with the eight-volume set of the Lives of the Saints by Alban Butler and Herbert Thurston, a work of considerable scholarship and a standard source for reference.

Nevertheless, the Roman Catholics did not feel in 1944 that they were being treated quite fairly and sensibly<sup>38</sup> . They were obviously right in forecasting the inadequacy of the 50% grant to voluntary schools, and later the

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<sup>38</sup>'We shall never accept the Bill as it now stands,' they declared on 4 January. Such entrenched opposition was mitigated in February after Butler offered long-term loans to improve school buildings.

government had to concede an increase to 75% in 1959, to 80% in 1967, and later still to 85%, 'giving what Catholics called, neither contemptuously nor ungraciously, instalments of justice'.<sup>39</sup> But at the time of the Bill, such concessions would almost certainly have wrecked the only chance of 'settling the religious question' which, since 1870 and indeed earlier, had created so much bitterness. It was a chance that no responsible politician could allow to pass.

The shape of the final settlement was that the Act approved a national system of free primary, secondary, and further education. It was to be administered through the local authority and supported by the rates and central government grants. The school leaving age was to be raised to 15 from 1947 onwards, and 16 as soon as practicable (this was achieved in 1970). The dual system was to continue but to be modified by offering a choice of 'controlled' or 'aided' status to all voluntary schools. 'Controlled' meant that denominational instruction was guaranteed a specific place in the curriculum if requested by parents and would be taught by a 'reserved' teacher; the local authority would retain a majority on the governing body and meet all the maintenance and improvement costs of the school building and plant, though the Church would still own the site. 'Aided' status meant that the Church retained overall control but would only receive a 50% grant towards improvement costs, while the local authority met the running costs. Because of the huge sums required for 'aided' status, the government evidently hoped

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<sup>39</sup>Cardinal Heenan's Autobiography, 1971, Hodder & Stoughton p.265

and confidently expected most schools to choose the 'controlled' option.<sup>40</sup> Although Butler had to compromise his ambition to establish a single national system, he felt that the agreement he achieved on one publicly funded system was at least a substantial move in the right direction.

For the Anglicans the choice between 'controlled' or 'aided' status was a realistic one. Where financial resources permitted, aided schools could be set up<sup>41</sup>, but controlled schools seemed to be a viable option since denominational instruction was safeguarded. Even where local authorities had control of their schools, Anglicans were confident that the State would do nothing to undermine the rights of the national Church.

The 1944 provision for religious education was particularly significant in that it was consistent with the Archbishop of Canterbury's 'five points' first put to Butler in 1941. The school day was to begin with a collective act of worship, and every maintained school had to provide religious education according to an Agreed Syllabus.<sup>42</sup> The subject was to have equal status in the curriculum with other subjects, and be taught at any time of the day. It was also open to inspection. Butler had been encouraged by the successful agreed syllabuses, such as that of Cambridgeshire (1924) locally negotiated

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<sup>40</sup>'For the plan to succeed, Anglican schools would have to opt for controlled status in large numbers.' (Butler, 1971, op. cit. p.101)

<sup>41</sup>Surprisingly over 3,000 Anglican schools opted for aided status, particularly in Lancashire and London. In 1983 the diocese of Southwark even took legal action against a vicar who, as chairman of governors of a small aided secondary school, negotiated with Lambeth LEA to become 'controlled' in order to expand the pupil roll and ensure viability.

<sup>42</sup> Butler had early on dropped a proposal to remove the Cowper-Temple clause from the Bill (1971 op. cit. p.99)

between the wars. These syllabuses created a structure for religious education that required professional handling, and that, by and large where LEAs took it seriously, stood the test of time and produced flexible and imaginative schemes of work.<sup>43</sup> The Protestant Nonconformists, led by Mr Garvie (Congregationalist) and Dr. Scott Lidgett (Methodist) who had both been involved in the controversy of 1902, were undeviating in regarding the provision for undenominational instruction as a precondition of their agreement to cooperate. On the other side, the National Union of Teachers wished to be assured that no religious tests for teachers were going to be required. Chuter Ede described the operation as a 'knife-edge with precipices on either side' (Butler, 1982 op. cit. p.160).

Once more, the Roman Catholics were far from happy with the compromise. While they were keen 'to promote educational progress within the national system', they were determined to retain control of their schools at all costs.

In 1941 Cardinal Hinsley wrote:

'I dread the possibility of the Government assuming the mission committed by our Lord Jesus Christ to his apostles... If we consent to a united statement of doctrine, the Board of Education may well say: "The Dual System is unworkable and Catholic schools must go; we know now the minimum of religious teaching required by Christians and all schools must be content with that". We have built up our schools at the cost of immense sacrifice amid our poverty. Now we must and will uphold them in their full religious character. Consequently we fear that any hint of our readiness to compromise on our religious principles would give the secularists in the government a handle for the abolition of our schools'.<sup>44</sup> (Heenan's 1944 biography, op. cit. p.148).

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<sup>43</sup>The Agreed Syllabus structure was even strengthened by more recent legislation in 1988 and 1993.

<sup>44</sup>Such views have more recently had a remarkable echo in Cardinal Hume's opposition to the 1988 Act, whose 'opting out' proposals threaten the 'very provision of Catholic voluntary education' (*Times* 13 January 1988)



Ironically, Catholic intransigence led to just such a threat from the Nonconformists and the National Union of Teachers in 1943. The Catholics' distrust was not only of the state but also of majority Protestantism, which was regarded as essentially compromising with the secular spirit. In Roman Catholic eyes Protestants diluted the faith, lacking definitive statements on Marian dogma or the divine presence in the sacraments and a living teaching authority in the Roman primacy.

This standpoint explains Hinsley's sharp negations:

'Denominationalism is a bogus slogan. The undenominational teaching in the provided schools is Protestant and the Agreed Syllabuses are Protestant and so denominational' (ibid. p.130).

Therefore the Roman Catholics had no choice but to opt for 'aided schools' where the distinctive 'sacred atmosphere' could pervade 'the hearts of teachers and scholars alike' (p.141) and Catholic religious education be safeguarded.

Relief that a general consensus had been achieved in relation to the problem of Church schools and religious education meant that these thorny issues no longer preoccupied the minds of legislators and educationists in the years after 1945. They were rightly more concerned with the implementation of free secondary education for all children; with raising the school leaving age to 15 and then 16; and with the introduction of CSE national examinations and 'comprehensivisation'. Interest in specifically religious questions was limited to raising the percentage grant for capital expenditure in voluntary aided schools to more realistic levels and testing the legality of progressive

religious education agreed syllabuses<sup>45</sup>.

The Churches' preoccupations were, for the Anglicans, managing the large number of small (mainly rural) schools<sup>46</sup> and, for the Roman Catholics, building sufficient new urban schools for their rising population<sup>47</sup>. Both had difficulty meeting the requirements of new building regulations (e.g. for assembly halls, specialist workshops). Yet a more coherent and realistic Roman Catholic policy was developing under the leadership of Bishop Beck (e.g. in recognising the need for the Catholic community to contribute to their schools' upkeep, Times Educational Supplement (T.E.S.) 15 July 1957). Anglicans also were prepared to allow Free Church representatives on to school governing bodies in single-school areas.

The fact that religious education was the subject of relatively few headlines and leading articles in the press during the early post-war period cannot be taken as a reliable indicator of either change or the absence of it in county or Church schools. Certainly rumours of government intentions to repeal the clauses on compulsory religious education in the 1944 Act were enough to trigger cries of protest (see Times leader, 31 October 1984). Apprehension

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<sup>45</sup>e.g. when the inclusion of Marxism and Humanism in Birmingham's 1976 syllabus handbook caused public outcry.

<sup>46</sup>A government report in 1959 revealed that almost 4,000 Anglican schools had fewer than 100 pupils (Cmnd. 1088)

<sup>47</sup>In 1963, the Catholic Education Council sent a memorandum to the Minister of Education expressing concern about overcrowded classes and shortage of Catholic teachers. In January 1965, Bishop Beck (Chairman of the Council) reiterated the claim for 100% government funding (to meet the costs of comprehensive reorganisation) and again in 1976 when the direct grant was abolished (one third of RC schools were direct grant and could not afford independent status).

about upsetting the delicate balance may have ensured that controversy was minimised; nevertheless, the advance in secularisation in the country has altered the context of the debate. Since 1870 the Protestant Nonconformist bodies in England have become strikingly and surprisingly weaker in numbers and influence<sup>48</sup>. If the secularist desire to eliminate religious education from all schools can be resisted, and the opportunities afforded by the 1988 and 1993 Education Acts are to be seized, it will become of the first importance to ask whether the two ecclesial bodies in England, which constitute the great majority of practising Christians, can or cannot come closer together in a common approach to the subject, putting behind them the antagonisms and defensiveness of the past.

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<sup>48</sup>Yet which, at a time when the Lord Chancellor is a 'Wee Free', cannot be said to be negligible. (Technically a 'Wee Free' would be the nickname given to the body in which he was raised, even more Protestant than the Free Kirk, and from which he was expelled for attending a Roman Catholic colleague's funeral.)

## CHAPTER III

### THE PARTNERSHIP OF CHURCH AND STATE IN EDUCATION SINCE 1944 AND THE CONSEQUENCES FOR ECUMENICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN EDUCATION

#### 1. Introduction

'The English school is unique in operating within a fine balance between political, church, community, parental and professional interests. The school is 'maintained' through that balance and its effectiveness might be measured by the way in which the contribution of each interest is accredited and valued.' (1984) A Future in Partnership, National Society, p.14.

The concept of 'partnership' formed the basis of R.A. Butler's 1944 proposals for a viable maintained system of primary and secondary education, ensuring educational opportunities for all classes and conditions of society and guaranteeing the universalist vision of 'One Nation' working together for a better future. The national system, locally administered, provided for consultation with teachers and parents as essential partners in the enterprise and with Church and other voluntary bodies and key organisations in the effective implementation of the dual system<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup>'The Ministry of Education would be the benevolent provider, grant maker and coordinator. The Local Education Authority would plan and provide, offering a framework of development, and itself delegating much to the head and staff of individual schools, through the intermediary agency of managing and governing bodies. Teachers accountable to the LEAs became accountable for the quality of the teaching and ethos of the school to individual parents and the children themselves. The role of parents as the primary educators was to be acknowledged by a close relationship between home and school; parents were accredited, if non-professional, partners...The Churches would now play their part, exert an influence and, it was hoped, assist in growth and consolidation'. (ibid. p.13).

How far can it be said that the balancing act between the partners has been successful? Since 1944 the relationships have at times been uneasy, if not strained, but the tensions were not felt to be destructive. However the legislation in the 1980s raised important questions about the future role of each partner in the education service and, in considering the involvement of both Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches in education, some analysis of the consequent changes is necessary and appropriate. This chapter traces a tentative but noticeable convergence of view about the purpose of Church schools between Anglican and Roman Catholic authorities, which may have further consequences for fostering ecumenical cooperation, while being, in some part, the fruit of a greater mutual confidence already achieved.

The Education Acts of 1986, 1988 and 1993 involve changes which are far more than peripheral or cosmetic, not only to the content of the curriculum but also to the accountability and management structures within the education service. Church schools have had close links with arms of central government, particularly since the DES, now DFE<sup>2</sup>, were responsible for 85% of their capital funding. At the same time they were maintained by their LEAs on whom they were largely dependent for professional support. In addition, they were part of their diocesan community, attracting the interest of the bishop and his diocesan officers. Such complex and interwoven relationships with their partners in the education service have always created both difficulties and constructive opportunities for Anglican and Roman Catholic Church schools.

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<sup>2</sup>The Department of Education and Science changed its name to the Department For Education in 1992.

The Conservative government's legislative programme over recent years has given much greater autonomy to school governors in the management of their schools, whether county or voluntary-aided. They can now admit as many pupils as they wish (up to the limit of their 'standard number' approved by the DFE) without being restricted by LEA policy. They have control of their own budgets - though the choices between expenditure on additional staffing, computers, or classroom redecoration are no less difficult for them than they used to be for LEAs. They are even able to 'opt out' entirely from local authority control with the endorsement of parental ballot and draw on 100% central government funding by adopting 'grant-maintained' status. The long-term effects of such major changes are only gradually becoming clear.

However, in marked contrast to these policies for increasing local school autonomy and parental choice, there is one area of education which the government has reclaimed for itself, namely, the control of the curriculum and pupil assessment. The development of the National Curriculum, which prescribes programmes of study and attainment targets for pupils from the ages of 5 to 16, has established centralised control over what is to be taught in the nation's schools and how it is to be monitored.<sup>3</sup> Only one subject, religious education, has to be taught according to a locally agreed syllabus, a framework already established by the 1944 Education Act, in which the Churches retain an active and lively interest<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup>See Simon, B. and Chitty, C. (1993) S.O.S. Save Our Schools, Lawrence and Wishart, Chapter 4.

<sup>4</sup>Bishop Graham Leonard of London led the debates on RE in the House of Lords in 1988. Leonard's successor as Chairman of the General Synod's Board of Education, Michael Adie, described the local standing advisory committees for RE as 'crucial to the future of RE under current policy' (Education, 22 January 1993)

The government's declared intention in these legislative changes has been to make radical alterations in the balance of power between central and local government. Intended as primarily a political strategy to reduce local control, it has had unforeseen repercussions for another 'forgotten' partner in the education service, namely the Churches.<sup>5</sup> The evidence gathered in this chapter suggests that the government was disconcerted and even taken aback by the cries of dissatisfaction from both Anglicans and Roman Catholics drawing attention to the fundamental changes in the partnership between Church and State in relation to Church schools brought about by the new legislation.<sup>6</sup> Just as Kenneth Baker appeared reluctant to be drawn into the issue of religious education in the proposals for the National Curriculum, so also it seemed that he had neither anticipated nor fully considered the 'knock-on' effects for the relationship between the Churches and central government.

As both Anglican and Roman Catholic authorities struggled to assess the likely implications and consequences of the legislation, they found themselves increasingly arguing from the same general standpoint, particularly over the issues of 'grant-maintained' status and religious education. This ecumenical alliance created a determined and potent lobby, notably in the House of Lords (which in the debates on the 1988 Bill found itself almost in the position of

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<sup>5</sup>See Bishop Michael Adie, (Education 14 December 1990): ' 'Partnership' seems to have slipped out of the Government vocabulary'. Nearly 25% of primary schools eligible to 'opt out' were Anglican, yet the Church first heard of the government's announcement through the media.

<sup>6</sup>Mr Baker (Secretary of State for Education 1986-89) commented in The Times (1st February 1988): 'I am surprised that the Churches should criticise this extension of choice'. Nigel Lawson admired Baker's political skill but felt that it was 'hard to imagine we would get from Kenneth the fundamental thinking about educational reform that I was sure was needed'. (1992 'A View from No. 11', Bantam Press p.601.)

being the only effective critical opposition). The government found it disadvantageous to cross swords with so many among whom it might have expected on other matters to find friends but, with a substantial majority, proved a formidable opponent. The shared concern for the Church's involvement in education also highlighted the extent to which the Churches were developing a mounting common perspective on the value and purpose of Church schools, offering marked contrast to the divided factions that had dogged the debates of 1902 and 1944. The antagonisms, far from being born of distrust between separated Churches, seemed on this occasion to be between Church and State.<sup>7</sup>

Accordingly, the following chapter attempts to explore the network of relationships affecting Church schools and their partners in both Church and State, tracing the development in these relationships and the changes brought about by recent legislation.

## **2. Partnership with Central Government**

The Department of Education and Science had traditionally left to the teachers the responsibility for school organization, classroom practice and curriculum content, while it provided central funding for salaries through the local authority and inspectorial support through Her Majesty's Inspectorate. Such delegation of responsibility came under fire in the late

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<sup>7</sup>A written report following a Carlton Club seminar (attended by this researcher on 31st January 1991), highly influential in Conservative educational policymaking, explicitly criticised the excessive influence of diocesan education committees. John Patten as Secretary of State dismissed this opinion as 'unrepresentative' (Church Times 30th October 1992). Seminar participants included the then Chairman of the Conservative Party, the Parliamentary Under-secretary of State for Education and the 1992 Chairman of the Education Select Committee.



1970s and '80s for a number of reasons: criticism was voiced by industry that schools were not turning out skilled young people for the labour market, by the Treasury that there seemed to be little accountability despite the vast expenditure on education, by the media that standards of morality and discipline were deteriorating in schools and therefore in society, and by government officials who felt that the 'secret garden' of the curriculum should be opened up to closer public scrutiny.

The Great Debate, launched by James Callaghan's Ruskin College speech in 1976, heralded a major shift in the structure of accountability in education. The 1977 recommendations of the Taylor Report (A New Partnership for our Schools), incorporated into the 1980 Act, extended representation on school governing bodies to include teachers and parents, and also allocated a place for a representative from industry or further education.<sup>8</sup> The establishment of the Assessment of Performance Unit in 1984 provided the DES with valuable statistical data to monitor standards across the country. The curriculum debate progressed from HMI's identification of nine 'areas of experience' ('Curriculum 11-16' in 1977), through the DES's more subject-specific core curriculum proposals ('The School Curriculum', 1981) to the National Curriculum of three core and seven foundation subjects, plus R.E., enshrined in the 1988 Education Reform Act. Meanwhile the teacher-dominated Schools Council, whose curriculum materials were generally well respected (if in practice little used) by classroom practitioners, was replaced in 1984 by the more centrally accountable Curriculum Development Council whose role

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<sup>8</sup>The Churches lobbied to ensure that foundation governors still retained overall control: unlike county schools where two parents are elected, in aided schools one of the two parent governors is appointed by the foundation trustees.

was later overtaken by the government's National Curriculum Council. At the same time, areas for in-service training were centrally specified through the education support grant allocated to local authorities. The unquestionable shift towards greater central direction and control has had a marked effect on the balance of the 1944 partnership, increasing the influence of central government on a wide range of issues that had hitherto been the domain of professional teacher organisations and local education committees.

While this shift to the centre is easily discernible at one level, at another the picture is not so clear. The government of Mrs Thatcher from 1979 appeared keen to take control of the curriculum and assessment but less happy to keep hold of the purse strings, thereby seeming to reverse previous roles.<sup>9</sup> Where before schools had very limited control over their budgets, from 1990 under the Local Management of Schools they had a considerable say in the allocation of their resources. Sceptics might argue that the government could then redirect any blame to schools rather than itself for the underfunding of education, and the expectation that the schools would raise their own supplementary funds was implied (for example by the inclusion of 'Gifts received' in the annual governors' report to parents, required since 1986). The government's move towards greater control through the National Curriculum is therefore counterbalanced by its insistence on the delegation of financial resources.

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<sup>9</sup>An Anglican headteacher of a grant-maintained comprehensive, interviewed in November 1992, reported that he had observed the Secretary of State at a heads' conference advocating the virtues of parental choice, paradoxically flanked by two large conference posters on 'curriculum and assessment', areas where 'choice' seemed no longer to exist.

Where do these changes in central policy leave Church schools? Throughout the debates on the Education Bill in 1988, the government seemed to hold up the voluntary sector as a model for the county schools of the future. Three characteristics were highlighted by Mr Alastair Burt, the Secretary of State's Parliamentary Private Secretary, at a conference in November 1987 organised by the Culham Institute and Exchange; namely a degree of independence from local authorities, some financial responsibility for its own affairs, and the ability to respond to parental choice.

‘We believe it is precisely because independence, responsibility, and choice have been at the heart of the *raison d’être* of Church schools that they have had a popular existence in the state system. If this independence is important for your schools and if it provides a useful option for your existing schools, why then should it not be extended?’  
(The Way Ahead?)

The resounding criticisms from both Anglican and Roman Catholic educationists concerning the legislation clearly dismayed and seemingly mystified government officials, who expressed surprise that Church schools should be so hostile to the extension of their ‘privileges’ to all schools.<sup>10</sup> Yet such criticism emanated not from anxiety at the extension of ‘privilege’ but from concern in the Church that the established partnership of Church and State in education, strongly defended since 1944, was now being undermined. The unequivocal reduction of local authority influence on curricular policies, funding priorities, and the management of school rolls, could not pass without protest from Church authorities who had long worked closely, if not

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<sup>10</sup> ‘Privileged position’ is explicitly condemned by the Vatican in The Catholic School 1977, Rome, para. 58

invariably easily, with local government.<sup>11</sup> Particularly for Anglicans who traditionally placed emphasis on the role of Church schools as part of the local community, such developments were generally unwelcome. An educational philosophy which seemed to encourage 'survival of the fittest' at the expense of others, and to view parents as consumers rather than partners, was profoundly disturbing to many who envisaged the Christian presence in education as one of reconciliation and service in the community and did not see market forces as providing the overarching motive to create a happy and prosperous society. Also, if the Anglican authorities welcomed the diversity created by Church schools in 'warning the nation off a monolithic, politically directed education system' (1984, Future in Partnership, p.27), they did not bargain for a diversity that could lead to 'isolated, isolationist fragmented units' outside any clear diocesan framework (cf. Geoffrey Duncan at Exchange/Culham Conference, November 1987). This concern was echoed by Roman Catholic bishops.

Church schools also had some reason to be sceptical about central government enthusiasm for their status. As voluntary aided schools, they were dependent upon 85% funding from the DES for capital expenditure projects, which in

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<sup>11</sup>cf. Bishop Michael Adie (Education 14th December 1990 and House of Lords debate, 12 May 1992, Hansard col. 279) and Cardinal Basil Hume (Education 27th September 1991)

recent years the Department has been slow to allocate.<sup>12</sup> The government's policy advocating grant-maintained status (GMS) as a way of opting out from local authority control might seem an attractive option for Church school governors attempting to raise their 15% liability (in some cases amounting to over £1m), when the government is offering to fund 100% of capital expenditure for grant-maintained schools. As one Catholic head wrote to the T.E.S. (8th February 1991), the bishops do not have to take responsibility for educating children in substandard accommodation: 'the only way forward is to join the GM queue'.

To what extent such funding will be actually forthcoming is yet to be seen, particularly following the 1992 public expenditure reductions.<sup>13</sup> Certainly

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<sup>12</sup>In May 1987 a joint letter to the Secretary of State from the Anglican Diocese of London and the Roman Catholic Diocese of Westminster expressed serious concern about the substandard conditions experienced by many Church schools in London, whose building schemes (merely to bring them up to DES minimum standards) were yet to be programmed by the DES. The letter continued:

'It is disturbing to find the general level of capital expenditure on County schools appears to be considerably ahead of that on voluntary aided. LEAs have more than one source of funds, whereas voluntary aided schools, except for a very few with wealthy foundations, are entirely dependent upon central government grant. We hope that it will be possible for the imbalance to be redressed'.

<sup>13</sup>Faced with surplus places in local county schools, the junior education Minister, Michael Fallon, incensed Roman Catholics in February 1992 by refusing to fund buildings for overcrowded Catholic primary schools: his suggestion that the Catholic children could be accommodated in county schools brought accusations from Church leaders that he was attempting to end the dual system. The day after an emergency meeting with Anglican and Roman Catholic bishops, Michael Adie and David Konstant, the then Secretary of State, Kenneth Clarke, announced his Popular Schools Initiative, whereby money would be available from April 1993 for oversubscribed schools to expand: the decision had 'nothing to do with the election; I respect the right of people to have a denominational education', he commented. (T.E.S. 14 February 1992). However, following the government's re-election in April 1992 and Clarke's transfer to the Home Office, the plan was quietly dropped, on Treasury insistence, the day after the publication of John Patten's White Paper: the implications of responding to parental choice in a free market were apparently proving too costly.

diocesan authorities (e.g. Anglicans in London), are anxious about the effect of 'opting out' on the future of Church schools, both in relation to diocesan policies and also on the extent to which total DFE funding would give total control to central government.<sup>14</sup> One Southwark officer commented: 'The greatest danger is that it could lead to the dismantling of the voluntary sector' (Education 25th January 1991). Another Anglican in Southwark however suggested that GMS may be the only viable option since so many governors and dioceses cannot meet their 15% commitments; 'opting out' should be coordinated<sup>15</sup> by the diocese (Education 4 October 1991). Some Roman Catholics facing the same predicament also advocated GMS (T.E.S. 22 January 1993).

### 3. Partnership with the Local Education Authority

It may seem surprising that the Churches should wish to defend their partnership with local authorities. Over the years, the relationship has been severely strained by such pressures as falling pupil rolls, 16+ reorganisation, admissions procedures, staff redeployment, or buildings maintenance. The dependence of Church schools on the LEAs was considerable, especially in the Anglican sector where, out of its 21.3% stake in maintained schools, 12.5% were 'controlled' while only 8.8% were 'aided'. Roman Catholic schools, on the other hand, were entirely 'aided' and constituted

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<sup>14</sup>The London diocesan director of education, addressing the Allington Conference of headteachers in May 1991, recalled that Sir George Young MP had asked ministers why Conservative policy was to encourage GM rather than VA status: the government's response was that 'we have got beyond that point'.

<sup>15</sup>However John Patten (appointed as Secretary of State for Education in April 1992) indicated that he was 'not in favour of mass opt-outs' (T.E.S 8th May 1992)

9.8% of the whole system; 'special agreement' schools count as 'aided'.<sup>16</sup>

In these 'voluntary controlled' schools, the foundation governors are in a minority and depend to some degree on the goodwill of the LEA governors - not always forthcoming, despite the legal but obsolescent safeguards of withdrawal classes and reserved teachers - to maintain the association with the Anglican parish community.<sup>17</sup> Specific denominational teaching within the school's general religious education programme or compulsory Anglican worship were prohibited by the 1944 legislation. There was therefore real incentive on the part of both LEA and Church to encourage an atmosphere of mutual trust and partnership.

'Voluntary-aided' schools, on the other hand, have far greater autonomy and are free to establish their own syllabus for religious education, advised by diocesan officers, and to engage in denominational Church services. In return for their 15% liability for capital costs, the governors have the right to develop their own policies and priorities, which may differ from those of the

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<sup>16</sup>Figures from DES Statistical Tables, January 1988. One Catholic school was given 'controlled' status by administrative error.

<sup>17</sup>This delicate balance was highlighted in a A Future in Partnership:

'There is often a generosity of spirit on governing bodies which deliberately seeks to make sense, in informal ways, of the historical link with the Church of England. There is a corresponding degree of trust that the Church will not overstep the bounds of informal relationships and begin to manufacture 'right' out of any well-developed and long-standing practices that have developed informally' ( 1984, op. cit. p.98).

LEA<sup>18</sup> while remaining within a national legal framework.

Managing an education service which includes voluntary schools may not be easy for an LEA preoccupied with its own concerns, its professional officers battling to manage educational policy in an increasingly party-political area and to cope with the pressures brought about by corporate management interests.<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, insensitivity may also be indicative of a reluctance on the part of the LEA to accept the Churches as partners in the enterprise of education<sup>20</sup>. Reservations have been publicly expressed by left-wing educationists about the divisive nature of Church schools in a community, if governors encourage 'hidden selection' of pupils through social, racial, or ability bias.<sup>21</sup> By contrast, right wing councils may tacitly condone those voluntary schools which exercise pupil selection according to ability, if it coincides with their own implicit policy to reintroduce grammar

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<sup>18</sup>Specific examples were where aided governors retained their Sixth Form provision, although the LEA decided to reorganise its secondary schools as 11-16 institutions feeding into Sixth Form colleges (e.g. Surrey, 1975); where aided schools considered religious affiliation to be a high priority in staff selection, although local 'equal opportunities' policies explicitly excluded such considerations (e.g. Ealing, 1986); where aided governors were reluctant to reduce their annual pupil intake if heavily over-subscribed in order that all local schools shared the burden of falling rolls and to prevent school closures (e.g. ILEA in the 1980s.)

<sup>19</sup>cf. Robert McCloy (Director of Education for the Royal Borough of Kingston-upon-Thames) in Crosscurrent, October 1982 (The National Society).

<sup>20</sup>There was an outcry in Sheffield in February 1991, when the LEA, without consultation, announced reorganisation plans to close five Anglican schools and merge another with a county school: no Catholic schools were included in the review.

<sup>21</sup>e.g. at the Socialist Educational Association conference (March 1990), a county headteacher commented that in admissions voluntary schools "are the most un-Christian schools in our neighbourhood" (Education, 23 March 1990). The Fourth R (Durham Report 1970) warned Church schools against 'ghetto-like' huddles (para. 47).



schools against local opposition. As the National Society's Green Paper pointed out:

'It is increasingly difficult to separate political expediency from educational viability, for the clamour of the former too often drowns the quieter deliberative voice of the latter'. (1984 Future in Partnership, p.76.)

Some might argue at this point that the quicker Church schools disentangle themselves from local authority interference the better. But this assumes that there has been no real advantage to them in building up an effective working relationship with the LEA. Many Church schools would acknowledge their reliance on local authorities to ensure satisfactory educational provision for their own children, setting aside for a moment any responsibility for the community as a whole. In this writer's experience, LEA officers provided support in a number of ways related to staffing, buildings and the curriculum. Local authorities paid the salaries of staff appointed by the governors and provided the professional advice necessary in the event of redeployment or dismissal proceedings, acting as an independent arbiter where there was conflict within the staff of a school.<sup>22</sup> Too often school governors faced crises related to buildings, such as asbestos, fire, or vandalism, when LEA support might be essential in effecting repair or replacement or even providing alternative temporary accommodation. In addition LEA professional curriculum advisers offered in-service training and guidance in implementing new curricular policies (e.g. records of achievement for school leavers) initiated by local or central government.

For reasons like these, Anglican diocesan authorities have generally been

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<sup>22</sup>The point was brought out by Tony Smith, then Chief Inspector for the ILEA, at the Culham/Exchange Conference in November 1987, entitled 'The Way Ahead?'

keen advocates of the partnership with LEAs. Not surprisingly the Anglican Board of Education (with such a high proportion of Controlled Schools reflecting LEA majority interest) has in recent years been more vocal than the Roman Catholic authorities. In 1985 the Board of Education's report to the General Synod emphasised

'the importance of working even more closely with local authority partners, particularly in the areas of admissions policies and staffing for Church schools. There will also be a need for close consultation over issues involved in reorganisation<sup>23</sup>... and the fuller use of the potential of Controlled status'. (1985 Positive Partnership, National Society, p.33).

Roman Catholic diocesan officers and headteachers have also expressed their support for the partnership with the LEA. One headteacher writing in The Tablet, (20 February 1988) commented that, although it has been difficult dealing with the

'complex and seemingly cumbersome bureaucracies, which seem to have been designed to ensure equity, uniformity and rectitude in the use of public money', 'all schools rely heavily on their LEA for administrative support, resources, and advice'; the opportunities afforded by financial delegation should be sufficient to overcome such difficulties without having to opt out and dissolve 'a partnership which, in the main, has served many voluntary schools well in the past.'

Especially in the Roman Catholic communities where Church schools often serve socially deprived areas, the isolation inherent in independence from local authorities could also undermine the efforts of diocesan planners 'to serve the best interests of all the Catholic pupils of an area' (Cardinal Basil Hume in The Times, 13 January 1988).

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<sup>23</sup>In Ealing, the cooperation between the London Diocesan Board and the local authority in 1981 resulted in the successful establishment of a new Anglican secondary comprehensive school which is now oversubscribed and well respected in its local community. The mutual trust built up by a close relationship between Church and LEA was critical in manoeuvring through the rapids of local party politics.

Nevertheless, in spite of its many distinguished advocates, the relationship between Church schools and their local authorities already looks very different from 1944. The framework of four decades has undergone radical change in the light of the 1986 and 1988 Education Acts. The provisions of the Education (No. 2) Act (1986) significantly minimised the differences between county and voluntary schools, in particular with regard to the power of governors and the school's LEA accountability, and to some extent signposted the phasing out of the dual system<sup>24</sup>. Important modifications in the maintained sector might seem unremarkable in the light of central government's declared policy of extending the voluntary school model into the county school system, and creating greater autonomy for county schools in relation to their local authorities. Nevertheless, the effect was to reduce considerably the distinctiveness of voluntary status. The additional requirements under the 1988 Education Reform Act, ensuring that LEAs hand over much of their budgetary control to individual school governing bodies for 'Local Management of Schools', reduced that distinction still further, and the creation of the grant-maintained sector raised the question whether or not the Churches are getting value for money by holding onto aided status

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<sup>24</sup>County school governors now have control of their staff appointments and premises, like voluntary schools hitherto, and voluntary-aided governing bodies are obliged to report to their LEA on 'the discharge of their functions as the authority may require'. Certainly the marked change in regulations concerning temporary pupil exclusions, for example, meant that the right exercised by voluntary schools governors to suspend or exclude a pupil for more than five days in a term was subject to LEA veto.

and LEA partnerships.<sup>25</sup>

#### 4. Partnership with the Diocesan Board of Education

The diocesan dimension, referred to throughout this discussion, now comes under the spotlight.

At the Culham/Exchange conference on Church schools of 17 November 1987, Vincent Strudwick, then Anglican director of education for the Oxford diocese, outlined the role he saw the Church playing within the educational partnership of Church and State: because aided governing bodies have considerable autonomy even in relation to the diocese, the responsibility of a diocesan board is to offer advice rather than prescription, based on relevant information and experience; the provision of the 1988 Act for grant-maintained status and open enrolment has serious repercussions for diocesan planning:

‘Opting out will destroy a key role of the partnership that is there to ensure that one person’s choice is not made to the detriment of the other’ (‘The Way Ahead?’ 17 November 1987).

This Anglican viewpoint was shared by the General Synod’s Board of Education Schools officer, then Geoffrey Duncan. Speaking at the same conference, he welcomed the importance of diversity in the education system, but admitted to feeling concern that grant-maintained status could give scope for aided Church school governors ‘to forget that they are part of the diocesan family,

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<sup>25</sup>As Alastair Burt, Mr Baker’s Parliamentary Private Secretary, pointed out at a conference on the future of Church schools:

‘The government’s proposals should be very acceptable to you. The grant-maintained school will be, as the Church school, a free school. It will have independence from the local authority and a large measure of control over the handling of its own affairs’ (‘The Way ahead?’ 17 November 1987).

part of the national Church family, part of a much wider maintained system of education.’ However, balancing this consideration (which is bound up with a deeper understanding of the nature of the Church than is natural to the Anglo-Saxon mind) against the arguments from market forces and self-interest, must be difficult for governors whose school is under threat of reorganisation or closure: ‘We could be in the process of changing the dual system virtually beyond recognition’ (Church Times 2nd October 1987).

Similar concerns were expressed by the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster, Basil Hume, whose criticism of the government’s proposals was widely publicised, (e.g. in The Times of 13 January 1988). He emphasised that ‘no Catholic school can stand in isolation from others in a given area’, and suggested that diocesan policies backed by the bishop’s authority should be the prior consideration for governors.<sup>26</sup> Traditionally, the bishop’s authority, communicated through the school’s trustees, has been widely respected, but the new factors brought in by the 1988 Act radically altered this long-established relationship.

The Cardinal went on to express two reservations about admissions procedures for Catholic schools. First, the Catholic character of a school

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<sup>26</sup>Such remarks may in part reflect difficulties within the Westminster diocese, where diocesan proposals for Catholic Sixth Form colleges were opposed by the governors of Cardinal Vaughan Memorial School wishing to retain its Sixth Form, and for whom grant-maintained status in April 1990 provided escape from the imposition of diocesan policies. This and other challenges by schools to the diocesan bishops’ authority are discussed in James Arthur’s 1992 D.Phil. thesis, Policy and Practice of Catholic Education in England and Wales since the Second Vatican Council, Oxford, pp. 122-130: he reflects that the Cardinal’s inability to influence, let alone control, the foundation trustees on Catholic school governing bodies and the lack of support for his position from Catholic M.P.s (p.94) are indicative of the decline in episcopal authority and the increase in the power of the laity since Vatican II (p.209).

could be threatened by the modification of its admissions policy if, under GMS, it chose to be more selective on pupils' ability or social background. Secondly, the procedures for open enrolment up to the 1979 standard pupil numbers would mean the possibility of taking in a higher proportion of non-Catholic children, by which governors would be obliged to admit applicants without regard to the balance necessary to preserve the Catholic character of the school.<sup>27</sup> This debate concerning the nature of the ethos and character of the Christian school is a major focus of the investigation carried out in this thesis, and it is of interest to note the common concern among both Anglicans and Roman Catholics. The 'domestic' view reflected in the Cardinal's comments is clearly in line with the Vatican's insistence, reaffirmed in the recent revision of canon law, on Catholic education for all Catholic children.

Nevertheless, the recent debate has also brought out a more general view among some Roman Catholic advocates of present government policy:

'If there are empty places and no Catholic applicants, should not the Bishops welcome the opportunity to meet the duty incumbent on the Church "to announce the mystery of salvation to all men" (Gravissimum Educationis)? This might be the only chance non-Catholic children will ever have of being introduced to the Catholic faith.' (Sheila Lawlor, deputy director of the Centre for Policy Studies, The Tablet, 20 February 1988.)

Such a view needs to be seen in context; for Dr Lawlor goes on to criticise the hierarchy's use of its authority in not allowing sufficient diversity:

'The governors may, in championing the cause of their individual school, come into dispute with the diocese intent on sacrificing the interests of one school to those of the wider Catholic community.'

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<sup>27</sup>A limit of 15% non-Catholic admissions to Catholic schools was recommended by Church authorities (The Month, May 1985 p. 157f). Leslie Francis (Tablet 15 February 1986) warned that closing schools might be more honest than admitting non-Catholic children without taking proper account of their needs.

Her priority is unequivocally the principle of freedom of parental choice, over and above the responsibility for the diocesan community as a whole.<sup>28</sup>

This notion is, hardly surprisingly, contradicted by a statement from the Catholic Bishops Conference (circulated to every diocese and parish in England and Wales in February 1988). The bishops argued that the government's proposals favoured the interests of a minority of parents at the expense of the majority, a principle 'difficult to reconcile with Catholic ideals'. It would be difficult for Catholic schools to remain faithful to the Church's tradition of caring especially for the poor and deprived and might open the way for a small group of transient, unrepresentative parents 'looking for only short-term gains, or acting from social or racial motives harmful to the interests of the Catholic or wider local community' to bring about a fundamental change in a Catholic school. This statement, supported unequivocally by the Pope at a Vatican meeting on 29th February, is of particular importance since it indicates an evident concern for the 'general' as opposed to the 'domestic' purpose of Church schools, and in principle is not dissimilar to the views of the Church of England's Board of Education expressed in 'Future in Partnership', (1984, p.63) a point explored in the next chapter.

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<sup>28</sup>This priority is shared by another Roman Catholic, Piers Paul Read, in a letter to The Times of 14 January 1988, who sought support for his view by reference to the Second Vatican Council. 'The Cardinal's views appear at odds with the teaching of the Second Vatican Council which, in its Declaration on Christian Education, gave to parents, not to bishops, the primary responsibility for the education of their children and called for 'the fullest liberty in their choice of school'. There are in fact many Catholic parents who, far from agreeing with the Cardinal's objections, look to Mr Baker's Bill to free their schools from interference by the bureaucracies of their bishop's diocesan educational services.'

There can be little doubt that parental choice has always played an important part in the *raison d'être* of voluntary schools and in the justification for their existence within the maintained sector. It is somewhat ironic that this should now be used to draw Church schools away from their diocesan links where these appear to hold back individual school development or attempt to support weaker schools and less privileged children in the Christian community.

An additional note of caution was sounded by Church education officers prior to the 1992 general election, about the vulnerability of Church schools in the future if they are 100% dependent on central government. The Catholic director of education in the Archdiocese of Southwark, Christopher Storr, in a letter to heads and governors of Catholic schools in April 1991, suggested that 'opting out' was 'politically inopportune' and 'morally questionable', since there was no guarantee that a different government would allow schools to return to the maintained sector. 'That could be a gift on a plate to some future administration that wants to get rid of Church schools', warned Anglican spokesman Geoffrey Duncan. His colleague, Canon Strudwick, was explicit:

'I ask whether the proposals will strengthen the effectiveness of the partnership to enable the better education of all children in an area or will it destroy the partnership as an effective force, making all the partners to a greater or lesser degree pawns of central government policy and practice?' ('The Way Ahead' November 1987).

In ensuring a degree of independence and freedom for Church schools to operate within the nation's education service, that diocesan link may be critical in the future, whatever party is in power.



There is yet another dimension to the debate on grant-maintained status. Under sections 87 and 89 of the 1988 Act, the governing body of a grant-maintained school may change its religious character, provided the trustees agree and the Secretary of State approves. The implications of this were clarified by J.D.C. Harte<sup>29</sup>, who suggested that governors and parents might wish their opted out school to reflect the religious views of a particular Christian or non-Christian group: the objections to the establishment of Muslim schools on the grounds that they encourage racial segregation or engender discrimination could be overruled by the pressure of parental choice. Certainly where a County school is 90% Sikh (Ealing) or an Anglican school is 99% Muslim (Bradford), there would seem a powerful argument to become grant-maintained. It could come about that through parental pressure a Church school could simply become Muslim or even cease to have a religious affiliation altogether and adopt a secular ethos. The pressure by the Christian Schools Campaign for their independent schools to receive government funding, supported by influential figures such as Baronesses Cox<sup>30</sup> and Blatch, gathered momentum in the early 1990s and their right to GM status, along with that of Muslim schools, has been written into the 1993 legislation.

The Cardinal's fears about loss of jurisdiction over Catholic schools and his bishops' concern that 'total financial independence on central government will have serious implications for the ability of our schools to retain their

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<sup>29</sup>Lecturer in Law at Newcastle University, in a paper in the Ecclesiastical Law Journal of 5 July 1989.

<sup>30</sup>Her Private Members' Bill was withdrawn for lack of support on 4 March 1991, but the issue was addressed explicitly in the 1992 White Paper.

distinctive Catholic curriculum and ethos'<sup>31</sup> had similar echoes in the Anglican Church. The General Synod attempted to require a Church school's governing body to consult its diocesan Board of Education and 'have regard to that advice' (clause 3) if it was considering opting out or altering the religious character of the school (clause 4). Such proposals indicated that the Anglican Board of Education was as much prepared as the Roman Catholics to defend its interest against central government or local pressure groups.

The Bishop of London (Graham Leonard) commented:

'Creeping privatisation of the education system is no more acceptable than would be the outright handing over of all schools to commercial enterprise' (Education, 9 October 1987).

The Churches are frustrated at the lack of clarification of government policy in relation to the future of LEAs<sup>32</sup>. The 1993 legislation sets up administrative structures for grant-maintained schools, anticipating large numbers of schools 'opting-out', driven by the principles of parental choice<sup>33</sup> and market forces. The Churches are reluctant to see their LEA partners 'wither on the vine' or Church schools 'floating away' from their diocese. They are disappointed at the prospect that John Patten (as a Roman Catholic) should be instrumental in the demise of the dual system which over the years has ensured the success of so many Church schools.

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<sup>31</sup> (T.E.S. 8th May 1992) The government was adamant that diocesan authorities should not obstruct Catholic schools from opting out. The most the Secretary of State was willing to concede (under pressure) was that he would take into account the trustees' views when Catholic schools sought GM status.

<sup>32</sup> See Bishop Michael Adie, Education, 29 January 1993; T.E.S. 12 February 1993

<sup>33</sup> Bishop Leonard sensed that GMS was likely to result in reduced parental choice as schools became more selective in admissions (Simon, B. (1988) Bending the Rules: the Baker Reform of Education, Lawrence and Wishart, p.79); this situation indeed arose for example in the London Borough of Hillingdon in 1991 and 1992.

An alternative, perhaps surprising view was advocated by Frank Field, a Labour MP of strong Anglican allegiance, who saw grant-maintained status, far from undermining the Christian ethos of a school, as a vital chance to safeguard or even restore the role of Christianity in a predominantly secular society. Critical of William Temple's capitulation to the State in 1944, he insisted

‘The Government's opting out proposals offer the Church what might be its last chance to re-establish its position in our educational system.’ (‘Opting out: an opportunity for Church Schools’ 1989, published by the ‘The Church in Danger’.)

Mr Field argued that Christian grant-maintained schools could create a strong federation, sharing expertise and resources, emerging as a significant force in English education, less vulnerable to political pressure than at present (an anti-erastian view consistent with his Anglo-Catholic tradition). One Anglican priest and governor of a large Church of England grant-maintained comprehensive school agreed: ‘The truth is that our ‘churchness’ has been strengthened by opting out’ (T.E.S. 8th May 1992).

The ‘grant-maintained’ debate has focused attention yet again on the *raison d’être* of the contemporary Church school, and it is paradoxical to find opinions from such opposite ends of the political spectrum forcefully arguing in favour of ‘opting out’ for Church schools. Is a grant-maintained school, as Sheila Lawlor points out, a Christian community in which parental choice should take precedence over diocesan authority or, as Frank Field suggests, a Christian enclave upholding values threatened by secular society? Or is a Christian school one which places a higher priority on its role within the

wider Christian community across a diocese or LEA, as now advocated by both Roman Catholic and Anglican diocesan authorities. With important principles at stake, these tensions are unlikely to be easily or quickly resolved, even by government dictat.

The debate raises serious questions about the future of the partnership between Church and State in Education, which has seldom been under such pressure since 1944. The alarming prospect of the head of the Roman Catholic Church in England and Wales being taken to court<sup>34</sup> is without precedent in recent years, and the Anglican Church's relationship with Parliament is hardly less uncomfortable after the Common's rejection of the Synod's proposal to allow divorced persons to be ordained. There seems a real danger that the current political ethos enhancing the primacy of self-interest is having an influence on Church schools to the detriment of a sense of responsibility towards the diocesan community. This seems likely to result in greater emphasis being placed on the 'domestic', role for Christian education. As individual schools face the reality of financial management and market economics, 'survival of the fittest' becomes the name of the game.<sup>35</sup> Meanwhile, the position of diocesan authorities and even LEAs is moving away from the role of partner to one more like that of a consultant or adviser; this

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<sup>34</sup>The Court of Appeal refused the Cardinal's application for judicial review when his removal and replacement of two trustees from the Cardinal Vaughan School governors was deemed illegal. (Times Law Report 18 August 1989.)

<sup>35</sup>The chairman of the Parents' Action Group of the Cardinal Vaughan School put it this way: 'Some of the parents are in a terrible dilemma because they have never before been disobedient to the Church. But they believe that the interests of their children must come first. We don't want to fight against the Church but we must protect our school' (Times, 14 November 1988). It is interesting that the diocesan concern for the 'common good' of the Roman Catholic community is not mentioned; the dilemma is polarised into 'obedience' versus 'the children's interests'.

shift changes the way in which they can influence schools. Recent Education Acts have placed responsibility and control firmly in the hands of individual school governing bodies, parents and headteachers, who can have different priorities for their Church school from those of their diocesan board. Where such differences exist, tensions are unavoidable.

5. The 1988 Debate on Religious Education and its consequences: the Churches' common cause

During the arguments about the implementation of a National Curriculum, outlined by the DES in July 1987, the Anglican and Roman Catholic Church spokesmen again became embroiled in a conflict with central government. Interestingly, once again, the two Churches found themselves on the same side, making common cause to defend the position of religious education in the curriculum. How did this public alliance come about?

The Education Bill originally proposed a national curriculum of three core (English, Mathematics, Science) and seven foundation subjects (History, Geography, Modern Languages, Art, Music, Technology, Physical Education). Religious Education was expected to continue much as before under the 1944 framework, its 'Cinderella' status to be enhanced only by additional procedures whereby parents could make official complaints if they were dissatisfied with the R.E. provision in their county school. The Government clearly believed that affirming 'the special contribution' R.E. made to the education of all pupils (cf. Better Schools, HMSO 1985) was sufficient support for the subject in the curriculum.

The Churches thought differently, sensing that in the wholly changed environment created by the National Curriculum framework, there was little chance that R.E. would survive in any recognisable form. It could be argued that this concern was unimportant, since their own 'aided' schools were unaffected by such proposals, religious education continuing to be determined by governors and diocesan boards, while 'controlled' schools continued to follow their local agreed syllabuses.

Nevertheless, there were two main reasons for their intervention in the debate. First, from a 'domestic' point of view, Church schools were likely to find themselves having to reduce the amount of time allocated to R.E. so as to meet the demands and attainment targets of the other subjects in the National Curriculum, thereby undermining one of the main reasons why parents send their children to Church schools.<sup>36</sup> Secondly, from a more 'general' viewpoint, the Churches felt obliged to stand up to what they felt bound to consider a serious threat to the spiritual dimension of education in the nation's schools as a whole.

There can be little doubt that the government's original proposals were dominated by a secularist viewpoint, indicating an increasingly utilitarian and materialistic approach to education in which market forces would supply the overwhelming purpose of schools. Dr Leonard, the Bishop of London, commented in an open letter to Mr Baker in September 1987: 'The main point we want to raise concerns the overall vision of education which inspires

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<sup>36</sup>This point was made in the statement from the Catholic Teachers' Federation in February 1988 and reiterated in the Hierarchy's letter read in all parish churches on 27th February 1991.

the government's plans.'

Cardinal Hume's article in The Times for 13 January 1988, entitled 'No room for Religion', stated:

'I come reluctantly to the conclusion that in its obsession with technology and economic prosperity, society is in danger of losing its vision and its soul. Certainly this bill as it stands offers us an educational system and curriculum at the heart of which is spiritual emptiness.'

The government seemed to take notice of these criticisms, possibly because they themselves had not fully appreciated the predominantly secularising nature of the DES proposals; possibly because they realised that, to allow the Bill to pass smoothly into law, they would need the support of the Church representatives in the House of Lords. The legacy of having a national Church still has advantages. Yet at the same time, Kenneth Baker was anxious to avoid his radical curriculum proposals becoming enmeshed in controversies over religious education, which past history had shown to be capable of bringing down the government of the day:

'I want to hold the principle established in the 1944 Act that the nature and content of R.E. should be locally determined. I am against central prescription in this sensitive area.' (Times, 1 February 1988.)<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup>This view, however, did not appear to take into account the fact that, under the 1944 Act, the Secretary of State had ultimate responsibility for both the content and implementation of the Agreed Syllabus arrangements for R.E. It was his duty to intervene if a local authority could not accept or agree on the syllabus of the statutory conference. (The controversy, however, over West Sussex's R.E. syllabus in 1981 suggested that the DES was most reluctant to exercise this power.)

As the debate intensified, Baker came under increasing pressure<sup>38</sup>. The Bishop of London, backed by the Catholic Education Council and the Free Church Federal Council, put forward specific new suggestions which on 17 March 1988 were eventually accepted and incorporated into the proposals before Parliament. Dr Leonard made four main points:

- (i) R.E. should be firmly placed in the 'basic' curriculum of every maintained school.
- (ii) The agreed syllabus procedure should be strengthened.
- (iii) R.E. should be included under the provisions of the new complaints procedure.
- (iv) All LEAs should have a duty to constitute a Standing Advisory Council on R.E.<sup>39</sup>

Baroness Hooper informed the House of Lords that 'with the help of the churches ... we have reached agreement on... additional safeguards for the position of religious education in our schools.' (Hansard 18 April, col. 1213) As Bishop Leonard later commented in the House of Lords:

'In our judgement it was essential to reaffirm positively the position of the 1944 Act with regard to religious education, both because of its intrinsic importance and because, if left where it was, religious education would have become virtually neglected' (Hansard, 3 May 1988),

This view was supported in a letter to the Times signed by nine Anglican bishops including the future Archbishop of Canterbury. Nevertheless, Bishop Leonard recalled (in a personal interview in June 1992) that Baker never

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<sup>38</sup>It did not go unnoticed that, comparing the 1944 and 1988 legislators with reference to Genesis (Ch.40), it was the butler who was rewarded and the baker who was hanged.

<sup>39</sup>Although agreed syllabuses have been required since the 1944 Act, they have not always been updated nor had all LEAs established a SACRE; this researcher was instrumental in persuading one LEA in 1985 that its 1948 syllabus (even though legally binding) was wholly inappropriate for its multicultural community.



appreciated the difference of approach between Anglicans and Roman Catholics - the former being primarily concerned for the community and the latter for nurturing their own children in faith. Bishop Leonard found himself in the dilemma that if he were to be sympathetic to the Roman Catholic approach, 'he would open the door to the Evangelicals' such as Baroness Cox, who was calling for 'predominantly Christian' R.E. to be taught separately (Hansard, 3 May, col. 502), with the implication that R.E. was about 'teaching faith' rather than 'teaching about faith'.<sup>40</sup> There can be little doubt that the last-minute amendments proposed by Baroness Cox and Lord Thorneycroft on 4 and 12 May 1988,<sup>41</sup> insisting on specific reference to Christianity in R.E. and school worship respectively, created considerable anxiety among the bishops and other peers.<sup>42</sup> On the one hand such clauses would strengthen the Christian elements in the Act; but at the same time they ran the risk of alienating the sizeable community of Britain's non-Christians, who could then undermine the inclusion of the spiritual aspects of the curriculum for all pupils by exercising their rights of withdrawal from R.E. and worship altogether.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Cf. Colin Alves' article in the British Journal of Religious Education, vol.13, no. 3, Summer 1992, p.174

<sup>41</sup>Hansard, cols. 502 (4 May) and 1343-44 (12 May)

<sup>42</sup>ibid., cols. 505, 510 (4 May).

<sup>43</sup>Bishop Leonard, in a personal interview (June 1992) remembered one anxious moment when he feared he might find himself having to vote against a pro-Christian amendment (Hansard, col. 1347). After midnight on 12 May, some peers encouraged Lord Thorneycroft to put his amendment to the vote. However, Lord Belstead reassured the Bishop of London, having made sure that only the 17 supporters of the amendment would be voting, that it would fall without him having to vote against it. (Standing Order no.55 required a minimum of 30 peers to vote.) At 8.30 am the following morning, Kenneth Baker telephoned Bishop Leonard to discuss what to do next.

In an attempt to save the situation, the Bishop of London engaged in rapid consultation with other national religious and educational representatives to produce an agreed formula, viz. that each agreed syllabus should 'reflect the fact that the religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian, whilst taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain.'<sup>44</sup> By the third reading on 7 July Baroness Cox was delighted to have explicit reference to Christianity, while the bishop was relieved to have strengthened the place of R.E. without jeopardising the established practice of multi-faith R.E. in many county schools.<sup>45</sup> What both were agreed upon was the need to ensure that R.E., including Christianity, took its place alongside other subjects in the National Curriculum. Their views were shared by Cardinal Hume, who also expressed the hope that Roman Catholics would be able to play a fuller part in determining religious education than in the past (The Times, 22 June 1988), implicitly recognising that their combative isolationism might now seem disadvantageous.<sup>46</sup> The Churches if united in common cause could prove a formidable power-base.

When the Bill passed into law in July 1988, both the government and the Churches seemed generally satisfied with the proposals. The story showed

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<sup>44</sup>An amendment incorporated into section 7 of the 1988 Act.

<sup>45</sup>Hansard, cols. 432, 434

<sup>46</sup>Bishop Leonard (personal interview, June 1992) recalled: 'I didn't talk much to Hume on education; although a charming person, he held himself aloof. We went as far as we could together. The Catholics seemed not to be speaking with one voice.' Bishop Leonard sensed differences of approach between the Catholic Education Council (mainly concerned with legal matters and trustees) and the Catholic Education and Formation Council (concerned with R.E. and catechesis).

that the majority of people in our democracy were not ready to support a wholly secular upbringing for the nation's children<sup>47</sup>, and that the Churches, when united in defending their Christian heritage, were far from being a toothless partner in the Church/State relationship.<sup>48</sup>

As the practical implications of the 1988 Education Reform Act became clearer, the Evangelical lobby grew increasingly concerned.<sup>49</sup> Agreed syllabuses on which the legislation depended were far from being 'mainly Christian' in content. Some in fact did not even mention God or Jesus Christ. One well-publicised test case, brought by a parent (Mrs Denise Bell) resulted in Kenneth Clarke's ruling that the Ealing agreed syllabus was unacceptable (April 1991). A test case (supported by the Parent's Alliance for Choice) about Christian collective worship at a Manchester primary school was threatened in September 1992; a TES survey reported that 83% of secondary schools did not hold daily acts of worship for all pupils (25 December 1992) and the HMI Report on the National Curriculum noted that collective worship was generally unsatisfactory in both primary and secondary schools (January 1993). A booklet entitled 'From Acts to Action', published by the Christian Institute, Tyneside, and launched at the House of Lords on 14 June 1991, encouraged parents to use the new complaints

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<sup>47</sup>A MORI poll in 1991 stated that 84.5% of the nation had some Christian allegiance.

<sup>48</sup>A further instance occurred on 3 February 1992 when the bishops, supported by Conservative backbenchers in the House of Lords, defeated the government by insisting that R.E. and worship should be retained for Sixth-Form Colleges granted independence from LEA control. Although Anglicans had only one controlled sixth-form College, they rallied to the cause of the Roman Catholics who had many.

<sup>49</sup>Baroness Cox in Hansard, col. 259 (17 June 1992)

procedure.<sup>50</sup> The partnership model with LEAs seemed all but gone.

In a statement on 20 June 1992 Baroness Blatch, then Minister of State for Education, regretted that two out of three local authorities had yet to redraft their syllabuses in line with the 1988 Act.<sup>51</sup> It can therefore have been a matter for no surprise that in the 1993 legislation the requirements were tightened to emphasise that 'Christianity is the main cultural and religious heritage of our children.' Nevertheless, as Bishop Leonard had feared, the Muslim Education Forum, deeply aggrieved at what they saw as these 'discriminating' proposals, launched a campaign for equal rights on 22nd February 1993.

On 29 June 1992, addressing a national conference on 'R.E. - the way ahead?' organised by Culham and St. Gabriel's Trust, the Archbishop of York urged the government to reconsider the exclusion of R.E. from the National Curriculum. Dr Habgood highlighted the pressure on curriculum time<sup>52</sup> and

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<sup>50</sup>The Anglican General Synod Schools Officer, David Lankshear, while welcoming the booklet as 'helpful', regretted 'its confrontational style with schools and local authorities.'

<sup>51</sup>Sunday Telegraph, 21 June 1992. Hansard also reported information from the Christian Institute that only 15 out of 117 LEAs had produced new R.E. syllabuses (17 June, col. 261).

<sup>52</sup>This was recognised by Government, for example in January 1991, when Kenneth Clarke went even further than the National Curriculum Council's new recommendation that foundation key stage 4 subjects like History and Geography might be combined for the GCSE examination. He announced that only the three core subjects would be compulsory for 14-16 year olds to make space for more vocational courses. The present writer recalls her interview with Baroness Young back in 1987 when these 'quart into pint pot' problems were categorically denied to exist. The HMI Report on the introduction of the National Curriculum (January 1993) noted that RE had inadequate curriculum time and resources; and that 30% of non-examination RE teaching for pupils in years 10 and 11 in secondary schools was deemed 'unsatisfactory'.

the shortage of qualified R.E. teachers.<sup>53</sup> (Few could choose to specialise in a subject outside the National Curriculum.) He noted the move to bring agreed syllabuses into line with a national framework and attainment targets, and argued that, with the demise of LEA influence, R.E. should no longer be marginalised in local agreements: 'the argument for local control is...incompatible with stronger syllabus direction from the centre'. The fact that the Archbishop's statement was widely welcomed by the Churches and government ministers<sup>54</sup> indicated how far the debate had shifted since 1944. The former seemed to be on the same side, to prevent R.E. in their schools being squeezed by National Curriculum requirements. The then chairman of the National Curriculum Council (NCC), David Pascall, in a speech to R.E. advisers/ inspectors on 10 July 1992, recognised the Archbishop's concerns but reiterated the government's view that local bodies should take their legal obligations seriously, supported by guidance from the NCC.<sup>55</sup> On 5th March 1993, the Secretary of State for Education finally announced a change in policy: he wished to explore, in consultation with the Churches, the

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<sup>53</sup>The D.E.S. Secondary School Staffing Survey (1988) showed that only 44% of R.E. teachers had any post-school R.E. qualification.

<sup>54</sup>At the same conference Baroness Blatch herself suggested that there was room for further discussion with government. Its commitment to the principle that schools should use their local RE syllabus had already been called into question by the 1992 White Paper proposal allowing GM schools to use the agreed syllabus (if revised since 1988) of any LEA in the country.

<sup>55</sup>Pascall asked the Anglican Board of Education to draw up a framework for a 'model' agreed syllabus in 1993: Alan Brown, the Board's R. E. officer, had some reservations about one denomination advising other faith groups but sensed that such a framework might be the only way the government could be persuaded to specify a minimum percentage of curriculum time for R.E. and what percentage of that time should be allocated to Christianity. (Personal interview and SACRE conference, 5th January 1993). The HM Senior Chief Inspector's Fourth Annual Report had warned in 1992 that 'the entitlement of some pupils to religious education was not being met' (p.17).

possibility of a national framework for RE.

Meanwhile, assessment regulations were also moving forward.<sup>56</sup> Lord Griffiths, then chairman of the Schools Examination and Assessment Council, himself a committed Evangelical, wanted to ensure that the study of Christianity was safeguarded in GCSE Religious Studies syllabuses. Nowhere were the consequences of the policy more apparent than in Roman Catholic schools: with 58% of R.E. examination candidates entered from Catholic institutions, the traditionalists in the Archdiocese of Birmingham, were able in 1992 to go further and insist that pupils could be offered an exclusively Roman Catholic option which took no account of any other communion. Other Catholic R.E. teachers, who wanted to encourage more ecumenical understanding by including a study of at least one other Christian denomination, regretted this more 'sectarian' emphasis (personal interviews in 1992).

The marked contrast with the hands-off statements of Kenneth Baker in 1987 showed how much the climate had changed in five years. On 21 June 1988 in the Lords, Bishop Leonard had been careful to deny that 'mainly Christian' meant 51% in every school rather than across the country, or that a 'mishmash' of different religious would be taught (col. 717). The year 1993 has come to see powerful supporters for the concern to guarantee that explicit Christianity is taught in every school.

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<sup>56</sup>Tests for 7,11, and 14 year olds in 1992 were at the pilot stage or beyond. National league tables of examination results began in September 1992.

## 6. The implications for ecumenical schools

The questions we have discussed have a bearing on the issue of ecumenical schools, especially important at a time when ecumenical relations seem strained by the consequences of the ordination of women to the priesthood and the episcopate in some provinces of the Anglican Communion, and the unattractiveness to Anglicans of the highly Ultramontane and seemingly autocratic style of John Paul II and Cardinal Ratzinger's Holy Office (CDF)<sup>57</sup>. There remain major areas where it is possible for the two bodies to cooperate in a common cause for the gospel. In England in the area of religious education in schools, both communions are finding themselves drawn together in defending their common interests, particularly in ensuring a secure place for RE in curriculum and assessment. Contingency plans are already being drawn up to make sure that the Church schools, both Anglican and Roman Catholic, continue to reflect the wider Christian community and do not retreat into a ghetto of self-interest if they adopt grant-maintained status.<sup>58</sup>

Common cause by the Churches can also be made where political or economic decisions may have damaging effects on Church schools, e.g. the abolition of

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<sup>57</sup>The causes for this drifting apart are briefly studied by Father Edward Yarnold SJ, (1989) In Search of Unity (St Paul Publications, Slough).

<sup>58</sup>Cardinal Hume's address to the National Conference of Priests, 5th September 1989, and Archbishop Carey's speech to Anglican headteachers (19th September 1991), warned against such self-interest.

discretionary school transport<sup>59</sup> or the DFE 'clawback' on the sale of aided school buildings<sup>60</sup>. In this process it may well turn out that the ecumenical cooperation at diocesan level, already established in governor training,<sup>61</sup> could prove invaluable and may provide the impetus for creating more joint educational ventures where diocesan boards, perhaps on both sides, have hitherto been suspicious of each other's interests and reluctant to work together in schools.

On the other hand, the greater autonomy given to individual schools, rather than creating a narrow 'ghetto' mentality, may encourage more ecumenical cooperation than would previously have been possible in dioceses where episcopal influence has brought ecumenical dialogue to a standstill. Even where relationships between local Anglican and Roman Catholic schools have been cordial but held on a tight rein from the top, governing bodies might find that the greater freedom given to them under the recent legislation could

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<sup>59</sup>Local authorities are required to provide free transport if a child's nearest school is beyond walking distance (taken to be 3 miles). Since 1944 most LEAs have also offered discretionary bus-passes to children wishing to attend denominational schools. In 1991 the Audit Commission (Home to School Transport: a system at the crossroads, HMSO) recommended the withdrawal of this discretion on economic grounds but, because of the effect particularly on the larger number of Roman Catholic secondary schools (the majority of Anglican schools being local primaries), Cardinal Hume again found himself in the High Court in 1992 in a test case against Hertfordshire. In one LEA, the two headteachers of the Anglican and Catholic secondary schools respectively joined forces in 1991 to lobby successfully for a reprieve, but this only lasted one year.

<sup>60</sup>The DFE 'claw back' their 85% of funds raised from the sale of an aided school site; the diocese therefore cannot afford to build a replacement aided school. A DES circular restricting limited funds for nursery provision to county schools, prompted a meeting between the Minister (then Tim Eggar) and both Anglican and Roman Catholic bishops in 1991.

<sup>61</sup>E.g. joint governor training courses have been run by the Anglican diocese of London and the Roman Catholic diocese of Westminster for several years.



enable them to build more ecumenical bridges. As things now stand, this can be no more than speculation. Ecumenism is too important to be left entirely to the bishops, but obviously it cannot be successful without them or in defiance of them.

Suffice it to say, in conclusion, that the changing roles in the partnership between Church and State are likely to have an influence on the future development of Church schools and to make a difference to the possible moves in ecumenical cooperation in education. There can be little doubt that the rise of parental consumerism and central government control have marked the demise of the universalist 'one nation' assumptions of the Butler Act of 1944<sup>62</sup>, which, with the increasing pressures of secularism and sectarianism in the 1990s, have important consequences for the Churches' role in education.

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<sup>62</sup>The T.E.S. commented: 'the fiftieth anniversary of the Butler Education Act is more likely to be a wake than a celebration' (26 March 1993, p.11).

## CHAPTER IV

### THE NATURE AND PURPOSE OF A CHRISTIAN SCHOOL: A SURVEY OF VIEWS AND POSSIBILITIES

#### 1. Introduction

This chapter aims to explore the broad feasibility of a common view of Christian education within an Anglican and Roman Catholic framework. Rather than adopt the overtly idealistic and theoretical approach, characteristic of what has recently been called 'utopian discourse', it addresses the more pragmatic, political and policy-related issues, characteristic of 'deliberative discourse'<sup>1</sup>. Philosophical and theological concepts are never far from the surface but it is not primarily a working out of the philosophy and theology of the Christian school; instead, it focuses on the cultural and political opportuneness of greater cooperation between Anglican and Roman Catholic schools and particularly joint schools.

However, if 'deliberative discourse' has one foot planted in some particular historical and social context, its other foot rests on more theoretical ground. It makes some assumptions in the areas of theory and ideal and, if it is to be reasonably sophisticated, these must be made clearly explicit. The philosophical and theological assumptions in the following study of feasibility and timeliness seem to be threefold. Firstly, there is a conception of the 'educational' which is 'liberal-democratic'; encouraging pupils to be critical and independent-minded, rather than passive recipients of a body of knowledge and doctrine with the accompanying dangers of indoctrination. Secondly, there is a conception of the 'ecumenical', which assumes ecumenical cooperation not only to be desirable but also an explicit response

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<sup>1</sup>See Walsh, P. (1993) op.cit. Ch. 4: a recent example is Lawton, D. (1992).

to Jesus' prayer in John 18 v.21; which is based on a unity that already exists (for example in 'common baptism') and which celebrates the enrichment of diversity rather than strives for uniformity. Thirdly, there is a conception of the 'Church' which turns away from an inward-looking defensiveness to witness outward into the world as a leavening influence in promoting justice and peace. Such threefold assumptions might be said to reflect a consensual perspective for those actively interested in ecumenical education.

This study draws on a wide range of sources, including research reports, both commissioned and independent, theoretical analyses, official Church policy documents, conference papers, academic journal articles and media reports: written sources are complemented by reflections on personal experience and interview data. The evidence points up some areas where Anglican and Roman Catholic views and concerns are clearly distinct from each other though only rarely mutually exclusive: equally, it suggests considerable areas of common concern and a gradual convergence of policy as all Church schools in Britain respond to recent legislation. The research data is used to identify the issues in these areas and to reflect a range of opinion from traditional evangelical through to ultramontane Roman Catholic, from official Church statements to individual parental views. My firsthand experience of Anglican and joint Church secondary schools has given me additional insight in relation to issues and their interpretation; in the case of single Roman Catholic schools, I have sought to compensate for the indirectness of my experience by extensive reading, consultation, school visits, interviews and taking advantage of relevant advice from my Roman Catholic supervisor.

This chapter reviews the issues for Anglican and Roman Catholic schools, looking predominantly at two dimensions of the schools' aims, the 'general' focus on service to the local and national community, and the 'domestic' focus concerned with support for primarily Christian families. Although the distinction may initially seem more appropriate for Anglican schools, this study suggests that these important issues are increasingly recognised also by Roman Catholic educationists. Underpinning this bifocal perspective lies a vision of Christian mission to the universal Church and the wider world, rooted in an ecumenical confidence which embraces diversity, maintains denominational integrity and strives for unity rather than uniformity.

It is difficult to overestimate the influence of the ecumenical spirit and radical changes brought about by the second Vatican Council in the Roman Catholic Church, and therefore tempting for Anglicans to assume that the impetus for change in approaches to Christian education has been mostly on the Catholic side. That would be seriously to underplay the significance of increased parental and governor influence in Anglican secondary schools, which has tended to demand a more explicit Christian emphasis similar to the traditional Catholic school and distinctive from the secular county school. Ecumenical dialogue is now well-established and ecumenical theology firmly embedded in Church policy, despite the Vatican's reservations on ARCIC 1's Final Report and the ordination of women to the priesthood. In the battle against a seemingly all-pervasive secularism, both Churches need to rely on support from dependable Christian allies rather than be forced to divert resources to counteract the misconceptions of defensive rivals. This chapter therefore explores where both Anglican and Roman Catholic schools stand to gain by cooperating in matters of common concern for Christian education.

## 2. The distinctive role of the Christian School

“The Christian churches must provide a distinctive contribution, one that grows out of theological reflection on the nature and practice of education”. (1984) A Future in Partnership, The Church of England National Society.

“The process of education, teaching and learning is a holy act and, since the world in which we live is God’s, all teaching and learning is somehow related to Him”. (1988) Evaluating the Distinctive Nature of the Catholic School, Roman Catholic Bishops of England and Wales.

In previous chapters, we have traced the development in the Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches’ understanding of and justification for their involvement in denominational schools over more than a century. The political climate of the 1990s demands that schools (especially Church schools) should have a distinctive ethos which is marketable to parents. But in clarifying their ‘mission statement’, to what extent do governing bodies give real consideration to the aims and purpose of a Christian school?<sup>2</sup> In considering these, how far do they take into account the strategic view of their respective diocesan or Church authorities in overall planning and development of Christian education? A distinction has traditionally been drawn by Anglicans between two differentiated aims of a Church school: the ‘general’ or ‘inclusive’ aim to refer to a school’s responsibility to serve the community, and the ‘domestic’ or ‘exclusive’ aim to educate the children of its own Church. Anglican policy in general, though not every Anglican school, has usually attempted to maintain a balance between these two aims, while Roman Catholics have unequivocally favoured the ‘domestic’ approach. It is important to observe, however, that this Catholic exclusiveness has been

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<sup>2</sup>Both Roman Catholic and Anglican national educational bodies have published support materials for teachers and governors e.g. (1990) Development materials for Catholic Schools, CCIEA and (1992) Mission, Management and Appraisal, National Society, for Anglicans; the latter also suggests it may be ‘of value to other denominations’.

offset by a more-or-less strong sense of themselves as belonging to an international 'universal' communion which will occasionally be referred to in this chapter.

Partly because of the sixteenth century legacy bequeathing the notion that literacy and Protestantism are a common cause<sup>3</sup>, one tradition of the Church of England has been to see Church schools as an integral yet distinctive part of the Christian mission to a secular society. This is not a mission that aims to convert and to gather into the well-walled sheepfold, but one that somehow assumes a common interest between national education and the national Church where every English citizen has the right to worship. The concepts underlying Roman Catholic understanding of what a Catholic school in Britain exists to do and to be are intimately bound up with the Roman Catholic doctrine of the Church as a body, entrusted by God with a dogmatic, coherently articulated faith to be proclaimed and defended, and in principle and practice independent of secular society.

As we have noted already in chapter III, the prospect of Church schools 'opting out' of local authority control under the 1988 and 1993 legislation has greatly concerned some Anglican diocesan authorities who fear that the 'community focus' of Anglican schools may become a thing of the past. The fear expressed by Roman Catholic authorities has been quite different, almost opposite, namely that where one of their schools opts out, it may cease to be

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<sup>3</sup> 16th Century Erasmian Protestants regarded the cause of the Reformation as virtually synonymous with liberal education: the martyrologist John Foxe hailed the German invention of printing as a providential divine gift, since the accessibility of Bibles undermined the medieval system of religious authority (1563, *Acts and Monuments* (ed. Pratt) III, 718). Erasmus and his followers saw secular learning as preparation for sacred study.

sufficiently Roman Catholic in its intake and character. Catholic authorities have indeed sometimes expressed a more general concern at the weakening of the spirit of local cooperation and the sense of local community implicit in 'opting out', but it is fair to say that this has not been their main concern.

The balance sought and achieved between the 'general' and 'domestic' aims seems most clearly evident in the ways in which Church schools view their admissions policies and, especially nowadays, the rights of parents to choose; in the form and extent of their religious education and nurture; and in the way they conceive the Christian ethos, culture and values of the school. We shall review each of these areas in the light of discussions in current literature, recent research surveys, and numerous press articles, which throw into high relief the contemporary significance of these issues in educational debate. This will help to clarify various approaches to defining a 'Christian' school before relating them to the two 'ecumenical' school case-studies of this thesis.

The main body of this chapter considers these three questions, exploring to what extent the two denominations are identifying common issues related to the aims of Church schools and assessing the implications for ecumenical cooperation. We start, however, with a more general enquiry into developments in the two Churches.

i ) Anglicans

The Church of England in the last century had little doubt that its task was the general education of the whole community, consequent upon a consciousness of its position as 'the Church of the nation'. It had a duty to provide Christian

education for the nation's children since the nation itself acknowledged Christian values in political and public life.<sup>4</sup> For the national Church, values of equipping the children of the Church to take their places in the Christian community and serving the nation through the moral formation of its children were hardly distinguishable. Thus for Anglican schools, the 'domestic' and the 'general' aims of providing a service for the Church and by the Church for the nation's children, could be comfortably accommodated together.

The Church of England has always somehow held before its eyes the ideal, never realised in practice, of holding together the idea of a national Church with that of the universal Church Catholic. That was what it had been before the Reformation; the very title 'Church of England' is medieval, not a product of the sixteenth century changes which the main line regarded as reform, not revolution or rupture. (Only the radical Protestants wanted a sect or a 'gathered Church' ministering exclusively to committed believers.) The name of the National Society which, since its foundation in 1811 'to educate the children of the poor in the principles of the Established Church', has guided Anglican educational policy, presupposes this aspiration. The Church of England has therefore tended to see its own catechetical task, often described as Christian nurture, as merging into its concern for the nation's general provision in education.

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<sup>4</sup>Psychologically this remained true even after the momentous constitutional changes enacted by Parliament between 1828 and 1832, and the opening of membership of the House of Commons to non-Anglicans. Otherwise there would not have been a row when in 1880 the militant atheist Bradlaugh claimed to take his seat. No one until recently had thought to repeal the requirement that the sovereign be in communion with the see of Canterbury.



The Anglican schools brought into the dual system in 1870 continued their practice of teaching the local children in their neighbourhood school, and such arrangements were strengthened after 1944, when many became 'controlled' rather than 'aided', thereby enhancing the shared responsibilities with the LEAs. The Bishop of Hereford affirmed in 1968:

'The Church is privileged to work in partnership with the State... We are in, and will remain in, education because that is where we belong'. (in Bander, P. (ed.) (1968) Looking Forward to the Seventies, Colin Smythe, p.271)

The 1981 Allington statement by Anglican secondary headteachers in south-east England, reaffirmed in 1991, called for a clear Christian basis to the life of the school, for Church schools to be accountable to the Church as well as to society, and for closer liaison with local county schools, thus pushing in both traditional directions at once. Prebendary Green of Southwark again emphasised in a paper in 1983 ('What are Church Schools for?') that the Church of England 'has a national role to play in leadership and service', and Anglican schools should become 'an arm of the Church in the service of others.'

Yet how far is it possible to create a truly coherent educational policy reconciling the 'domestic' or internal role of Anglican Church schools in serving the Church with their more 'general' role of serving the nation? This issue has been hotly debated, particularly since the 1970 Durham Report ('The Fourth R', SPCK).<sup>5</sup> The increasing pressures of secularisation and free-market economics might be taken to argue that any such reconciliation, if not inherently impossible, is at least unlikely to be

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<sup>5</sup>As one may see from the National Society's (1984) A Future in Partnership, (1990) The Church School or (1992) A Shared Vision and O'Keeffe's (1986) Faith, Culture and the Dual System

realized. As British society has changed, becoming more pluralistic and secular, so Church schools have had to put their 'general' aim under closer scrutiny.

The Anglican school appears caught on the horns of a dilemma. It does not wish to separate itself from the secular world, since it is convinced that Christian values contribute to making society more morally responsible and sensitive. At the same time it claims to retain a distinctiveness over against secular society, contending that the Christian community has a unique gospel to proclaim transcending, for example, what can be learnt from the media.<sup>6</sup> However, the ever-increasing pluralism of contemporary society in the west creates enhanced pressures. John Hull has argued that the two-pronged pluralism of Britain today, partly from the increased number who claim to have no religious belief whatever, partly from those who adhere to a faith other than Christianity, makes it no longer possible to nurture children into the faith of their 'society'.<sup>7</sup> If county schools are predominantly liberal secular humanist institutions, some of which attempt to provide their pupils with a basic understanding of world religions and 'life-stances', whereas specifically religious schools (either aided or independent) make no apology for encouraging parents to value the nurture of their children within a specific faith tradition with a definite creed, those Anglican schools that attempt to avoid this polarisation may find their Via Media a lonely path to travel.

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<sup>6</sup>The problem is hardly a new one, recognised in St Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, chapters 5-8.

<sup>7</sup>(1984) Studies in Religion and Education, Falmer Press, p.47.

The National Society and the various diocesan education authorities are only too well aware of the difficulties. They have seen themselves in close partnership with secular government. Yet they are convinced that Church schools need to be distinctive and unhesitatingly Christian to justify the massive expenditure on them. One problem is that it is far from easy to provide a totally convincing definition of their distinctiveness. A Future in Partnership (1984) outlined ten characteristics of a good Church school, but many of the ten could be true of good and humane county schools with a predominantly Christian intake of pupils:

‘an implicit Christian ethos, a sensitivity to different beliefs, a distinctive all-round excellence, links with the community, living out the concerns of the gospel, a learning process related to God’s revelation, a selfless commitment in relationships, a beacon to the transcendent, an integrated view of knowledge, and a creative stimulus to teaching and learning’. (p.71)

In a more recent National Society booklet on The Curriculum: a Christian View, (1990) Geoffrey Duncan affirmed without reservation that important educational values are common ground among professional teachers, whether Christian or not; e.g personal integrity in respecting both their own and their pupils’ commitment; the establishment of open and honest relationships; the importance of constructive discipline; an appropriate curriculum which respects Christian values; a coherent and balanced curricular view, and a commitment to develop pupils of all abilities to their full potential. But he insisted that Christian values cannot only be part of the ‘hidden’ curriculum:

‘It would be difficult to affirm the Christian ethos of Church schools if the manifestation of Christian faith were not apparent in personal relationships, in admissions policies, in the relationship with local Christian communities’ (p.8).

In other words, the ‘implicit Christian ethos’, of which A Future in Partnership spoke, must from time to time become altogether explicit or its

presence might be seriously doubted.

Further indications of the current concern to identify ways in which Christian values can be made explicit may be found in Bernadette O'Keeffe's 1986 research, Faith, Culture and the Dual System, a comparative study of Church and County Schools. Particular comments on school worship or moral and religious education given by some of her Anglican respondents include :  
on worship —

'Assembly is distinctively Anglican'. 'We follow the order of the Christian year'. 'Christianity is the religion of our country, and all children regardless of their backgrounds should be made aware of its significance' (op. cit. p. 77-8);

on moral teaching —

'I would hope their view of Christian morality would come from all subjects, not just RE. This is a Christian school, and Christian morality fuses all of the school' (p. 104);

on religious education —

'Our parents expect us to bring their children up in the Christian faith'. 'I am preparing them for a Christian lifestyle and a personal and detailed knowledge of Christ' (p.95).

Such sentiments, varying as they may in sophistication and presenting one view of the issue, go some way towards answering the critics who feel that Anglican schools are not offering 'full service' (nor indeed value for money) to the Church that sponsors them. There are many teachers in Church schools aware that Christianity ought not to lose its quality of being sui generis: the salt must not lose its savour. But that cannot mean building ghetto-like walls to protect such values.<sup>8</sup> For one thing, Christian values do still affect the moral assumptions of society far beyond the frontiers of the specifically

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<sup>8</sup>See The Durham Report, The Fourth R, paras. 471,482.

worshipping community. John Haldane has commented that

‘it is still the Churches that provide the main source of reflection upon the meaning of public virtue, and they are perhaps the only critics of government who are not simply regarded as self-interested’ (1986) British Journal of Educational Studies vol.34, no. 2, p.176.

This kind of observation raises the twin questions of whether it is truly realistic to suppose that the Church still exerts such an influence and whether it can exert it effectively within the Establishment without diluting the gospel and its responsibilities to its own Church members.

ii) Roman Catholics

Until the second Vatican Council, the Roman Catholic Church (especially in Britain) appeared, to most outsiders at any rate, to be an enclosed society erecting walls to defend the purity of faith and morals against hostile forces at first Protestant, later secular, outside. Since Vatican II, the characteristic attitude of Roman Catholic institutions, in Britain as in the West more generally, has come to seem more open. The pre-conciliar position<sup>9</sup> insisted that the Catholic child from the Catholic home must receive education at the hands of Catholic teachers in a Catholic school. In the code of canon law of 1917, canon 1374 declared against any education of Catholics in non-Catholic schools; and ‘because of the risk of perversion’ canon 2319 held over parents who arranged a non-Catholic education for their children the formidable threat of formal excommunication. The position was justified in 1955 by the Chairman of the Catholic Education Council, Bishop George Beck of Brentwood (The Case of Catholic Schools, p.5) on the ground of child psychology: the Catholic child in a non-Catholic environment was faced with

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<sup>9</sup>e.g. Leo XIII’s encyclical Militantis Ecclesiae, 1879 and Pius XI’s Divini Illius Magistri, 1929.

divided loyalties leading 'either to moral irresponsibility or to acute moral tension'. Although the threats and penalties have gone<sup>10</sup>, even the new code of canon law of 1983 insisted that Roman Catholic parents have a duty to send their children to Roman Catholic schools unless that was impossible (canon 798), and education 'must be based on the principles of Catholic doctrine' (canon 803).

It is an axiom that the Church has the duty and the right to instruct children in the truth it has received, and, moreover, acceptance of the truth defines a believer. Bishop Beck put it succinctly in 1955:

'The essence of true religious teaching is that the teacher should believe that which he teaches, and should be delivering, as he believes it, the whole message of truth' (The Case for Catholic Schools).

Accordingly the magisterial approach stressed the importance of catechetical teaching, handing on doctrine verifiable in authoritative collections of Catholic dogma or morals, and taught in an essentially didactic way, in which the pupils did not so much exercise a personal discernment as accept that, as members of the Catholic community, this was what they were committed to.

Cardinal Heenan pointed to one defence of this approach by asking,

'Would our small flock remain the largest Church-going community if we were to abandon our schools?' (Catholic Herald 29 April 1966)

A more refined version of this form of defence for specifically Roman Catholic education for Roman Catholics has proceeded empirically, by seeking to gather factual evidence on the relative effect of Catholic and non-Catholic

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<sup>10</sup>At the level of higher education there had been some relaxation of this rigour even before Vatican II; but until as recently as the mid 1950s a Roman Catholic religious wishing to attend, say, the University of Oxford was bound to obtain special permission, and in Ireland attendance at Trinity College Dublin was austere tagged as mortal sin by the Archbishop of Dublin at the time.

schooling upon an individual's religious behaviour and practice. Greeley's research in America in 1963, replicated in 1974,<sup>11</sup> showed 'a moderate but significant association...between Catholic education and adult religious behaviour' (1966, p.219); 'Catholic schools do have an impact which is net of education, parental religiousness, spouse's religiousness, age, sex and educational attainment' (1976, p.306f).

Hornsby-Smith's research in England cautiously confirmed such findings:

'Catholic schools appear to be effective in producing adult religious outcomes, although the actual effect is small, especially in relation to the effects of variables like parental religiosity and spouse's religiosity which measure the impact of the home' (1980, p.105)<sup>12</sup>.

On the other hand, the admission that a Catholic school cannot achieve much without support in the home and family was at one time used by some to query the huge investment in separate schools. At the 1966 Downside Symposium, A.E.C.W. Spencer observed that if, for example, better attendance at mass

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<sup>11</sup> Greeley, A.M. and Rossi, P.H. (1966) The Education of American Catholics, Chicago, Aldine Publishing.

Greeley, A.M., McCready, W.C. and McCourt, K. (1976) Catholic Schools in a Declining Church, Kansas City; Sheed, Andrews & McMeel. The more the Church appeared to be undergoing an institutional crisis, the more important Catholic schools appeared to be in nurturing the Church of the future: 'Catholic schools are a tremendous asset for the changing Church. They tend to produce people who are change-oriented and flexible, but secure in both their world-view and their loyalty to past traditions and values' (p.301).

<sup>12</sup> Hornsby-Smith, M.P. and Lee, R. (1980) Roman Catholic Opinion: a study of Roman Catholics in England and Wales in the 1970's, University of Surrey.

He argued that attention should also be paid to adult catechesis since this would help counteract the long-term decline in Catholic influence as children grew up and reinforce the family support for Catholic pupils at school. This priority was also advocated by the Bishops' Conference report in 1981, Signposts and Homecomings (St Paul Publications) and is still on the Catholic agenda (cf. Priests and People, February 1993 vol. 7 no. 2). See also Hornsby-Smith, M.P. (1978) Catholic Education: the Unobtrusive Partner, London, Sheed & Ward, p.46.

were to be indicative of the results of Catholic schooling, then it had failed; one should be looking, he urged, to the supportive family background rather than to the school. From this he boldly concluded that 'the empirical basis of the strategy of providing a place in a Catholic school for all Catholic children is extremely doubtful' (Jebb, P., ed. (1968) Religious Education, Darton, Longman & Todd).<sup>13</sup> In the same 1966 Symposium, Michael Gaine expressed the view that, although Catholics in the latter half of the twentieth century have generally ceased to speak about 'the danger of perversion' (which we have already seen to be formally included in the 1917 code of canon law), they appear to be needlessly defensive about the importance of a 'Catholic atmosphere' for their children's education. More moderately, Hornsby-Smith (1978, p.139) later encouraged Catholic education policymakers, faced with the falling school rolls of the 1980s, to turn their attention from the quantitative to the qualitative - to reassess their dominant perspective of expansion and to evaluate the effectiveness of Catholic education.

The desire to retain the system is sometimes linked with the feeling that Catholic schools are simply part of the inheritance which Catholic forefathers made huge sacrifices to keep, and which should, for that reason alone, be preserved at all costs. That is, the schools are the visible and public symbol of the essential distinctiveness of the Roman Catholic Church and of its determination to resist secularity, nationalism, and all attempts to dilute the faith into some undenominational flag-waving pageantry. Catholic schools seem to manifest, in bricks and mortar, the truth that, at least until comparatively recently, Catholicism has not been perceived as a part of the

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<sup>13</sup>This opinion was endorsed by Jean Johnson in her study of six Catholic schools in Sussex (submitted as a M.A. Dissertation, London 1978).



national religion of the English, Scots, Welsh, and has had next to no links with the state or with the diffusion of the notion of 'Britain as a Christian country'. The retention of Catholic schools is therefore a sign of that determination to be distinct, perhaps even awkward to the point of pertinacity, which tended to characterise English Catholics before Vatican II began to produce a different social attitude, and which is consciously and nostalgically felt by some as a proper manifestation of the uncompromising spirit. (cf. Tablet 14 September 1985)

Since the second Vatican Council, there have been a number of thought-provoking publications, reflecting wide-ranging opinions, as theologians and educationists explored the implications of that Council for Catholic education. The Council's document on Catholic Schools (1977) spoke of

'a problem requiring clear and positive thinking, courage, perseverance and cooperation to tackle the various measures without being overawed by the size of the difficulties from within and without, not by persistent and outdated slogans' (para. 64). The Catholic school's job is 'infinitely more difficult, more complex, since this is a time when Christianity demands to be clothed in fresh garments,...when a pluralistic mentality dominates' (para. 66). The problem is to identify and lay down the conditions necessary for the Catholic school to fulfil its role 'in the saving mission of the Church, especially for education in the faith' (para. 9).

The 'aggiornamento' of Vatican II has moved the Roman Catholic Church out into a close engagement with the modern world, thereby encouraging Catholics to develop a more world-involved perspective and opening up more radical theological discussion. The Council crucially balanced its reaffirmation of papal supremacy with an emphasis on collegiality<sup>14</sup>, strengthened through the role of national bishops' conferences. This not only encouraged a stronger sense of national identity (eg. the Dutch or American Church), but also

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<sup>14</sup>Lumen Gentium, 22 f.

enhanced lateral links across national boundaries (eg. pan-European or pan-Latin American and particularly between developed and developing countries). Again, the bishop of the local diocese is not to be seen merely as the delegate of the Pope, handing out to his obedient people the instructions of higher authority, but rather as himself representing the apostolic succession and performing a role in relation to his clergy and laity which best enables them to participate and to express their faith, always of course in eucharistic fellowship with the whole Catholic Church and never apart from it.

The acknowledgement of the local diocesan community as something active and, not merely a passive recipient of curial directives, has consequences for the understanding of catechesis and religious education generally. Vatican II described the laity not so much as belonging to the Church as being the Church: through the laity the Church is present in the world.<sup>15</sup> Essential to that maturity is a personal and religious freedom to take responsibility for one's understanding of the faith as contrasted with an unreflective acceptance of a prefabricated set of propositions.<sup>16</sup> In the field of biblical studies, the past three or four decades have seen an increasing rapprochement in method

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<sup>15</sup>In Sacramentum Mundi (II, 1969, p. 355) Karl Rahner describes this new view of the Church in the following terms:

'It will be a Church, the existence of which is based on the laity as personal believers, and less on the institutional element or on the clergy as the traditional supporters and recipients of its social prestige. A laity of that kind, however, by its very nature is the world in the Church'.

<sup>16</sup>In The Catholic School (1977, para. 70) produced by the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 'apostolic cooperation' is emphasised on the part of clergy, religious, and laity - in line with Vatican II's Apostolicam Actuositatem 25 - to ensure the principle of participation and corresponsibility in Catholic education. Equally, the Catholic school is to 'develop persons who are responsible and inner-directed, capable of choosing freely in conformity with their conscience' (para. 31).

and results between Catholic and Protestant biblical scholars <sup>17</sup>. In contrast to the days of Vatican I, Bible reading is now regarded as appropriate for laity as well as clergy (Constitution on Divine Revelation, 22, Dei Verbum 1965). The ability of Roman Catholic teachers to balance doctrinal with biblical study has become important in devising religious education appropriate to the Christian school: the inveterate Protestant prejudice that by policy Roman Catholics neglect the Bible is antiquated.

The decree of Vatican II on Ecumenism, Unitatis Redintegratio (November 1964), gave concrete substance to many of the ideas reflected in other conciliar discussions and documents. 'The restoration of unity among all Christians' is one of the principal concerns of the second Vatican Council (para. 1). Such unity may be furthered by a renewal of the Church, e.g. by biblical and liturgical movements, catechetics, social teaching (para. 6); by prayer and discriminating use of common worship (para. 8); by the development of theology paying due regard to the ecumenical point of view (para. 10). The 'cooperation' and 'dialogue' advocated by the Council presupposes a massive change of direction from the suspicious reserve of the pre-conciliar period and, as we shall see, has unintentionally but

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<sup>17</sup>The virtual disappearance of the Imprimatur except for catechetical handbooks means that it may not be easy to judge from a monograph itself whether the author is a Roman Catholic, Anglican, Methodist or Lutheran. How carefully Catholic biblical scholars had to tread in the days before Vatican II is evident in the Personal Reflections and Memoirs of even so great a scholar as Pere Lagrange O.P., written in 1926 and 1930, English translation by Father Henry Wansborough (1985). On 29 June 1912 Lagrange was disgraced at Rome, but (it has been said) was 'long practised in humility and the art of apologising for being right'. The extent of contemporary liberation can be judged by a comparison of the caution shown in the notes of the 1966 edition of the English Jerusalem Bible with the freedom and learned candour of Roman Catholic biblical scholars manifested in the 1985 revision of the same book.

substantially brought Roman Catholic educational policy closer to that traditional in the Church of England, thereby laying the foundations for innovative and cooperative developments in joint schools.

### 3. Admissions Policies and Parental Choice

The question of admissions policies is primary, for the decisions of the governors in this area have a profound influence on all the activities of the school. Does the policy place more emphasis on the 'domestic' priorities of Church attendance and commitment, or on general principles of admitting children from the local community whose parents express a preference for Christian education though they have no specific parish affiliation and possibly an allegiance to a non-Christian faith?<sup>18</sup> Admissions criteria cannot, however, be considered in isolation. Contemporary political philosophy has made the issue of parental choice an overriding consideration in educational policy-making, from open enrolment through to grant-maintained status.

Prior to the 1980s, 'one nation' Conservatives and Labour party strategists had held a more or less consensus view that children were entitled to the best education in a comprehensive system offering equality of opportunity for all. Church schools were sometimes seen as an historical anomaly in this age of equality, since they were operating a distinctive selection procedure,

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<sup>18</sup>One aspect of the dilemma is summarised by one Anglican headteacher in O'Keeffe's 1986 survey:

'At the moment we are accused by those who do not like Church schools of not taking pupils who are not Christians. If we are undersubscribed and did not want to have unfilled places and then allowed more and more non-Christians in at a time of falling rolls when county schools are losing children, we could be accused of poaching children from them'. (op. cit. p.24.)

attaching particular weight to Church attendance<sup>19</sup>. Suspicions were inevitably fuelled by the fact that many Church schools remained oversubscribed at a time of falling pupil rolls in the 1980s. What then was the attraction of Church schools for parents?

In the 1970s and '80s, reorganisation for comprehensive education was the policy of the majority of LEAs in Britain. As 11+ selection was dismantled, so the parents' desire to identify the 'best school' for their children (granted that private education was out of the question, for whatever reason) was diverted into a choice between different state schools, including Church schools. Parental priorities might include smart uniform, regular homework, high academic examination results (publication of which has been mandatory since 1980), setting or streaming, and a perception that the school's values coincided with those of the parents: in middle class catchment areas, the comprehensive school tended to reinforce middle class values<sup>20</sup>. Was the priority of those attracted to Church schools a good academic record, a caring environment, or one where religious faith was taken seriously? Again, how well did the parents applying to the Church school reflect the general social and ethnic background of the school's local community?

As non-Christian faith-communities have established themselves

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<sup>19</sup>They were therefore viewed somewhat suspiciously by the Left (e.g. in pamphlets from the Socialist Educational Association).

<sup>20</sup>Walford and Jones' 1986 survey showed comprehensive schools in Birmingham 'were successful and efficient and would ensure that there was a high chance of adequate certification to legitimate social class reproduction' (Journal of Education Policy vol. 1, no.3 p.251). By contrast schools in Hackney, if measured by examination results as in Harrison's Inside the Inner City (Penguin, 1983), show a clear bias towards 'certified failure', achieving only half the national average in 'O' level successes.

permanently in Britain, these parents' interest in the local Church school has in many instances been considerable, since the alternative is usually the secular environment of a county school based on the values of liberal humanism.<sup>21</sup> Ann Dummett (a Roman Catholic and distinguished activist in combating racism) commented:

'Many parents, whether Christian, Sikh, Muslim, or Hindu, take the attitude that a school which has some religious character is better than a completely secular school. There are great differences between religions, but none of these is so great as the gulf between people who practise a religion and people with no religion at all'. (1981) Race and Church Schools, Runnymede Trust, para. 23.

Church school headteachers are from time to time approached by families who are firm adherents of non-Christian faiths who want a school where religious beliefs and their influence on daily life are taken seriously. This creates difficulties where admission policies are strictly based on the priority of Christian families, but where the catchment area has substantial multi-ethnic communities: the problem exists also for the Church school in a mainly white area which wishes to admit ethnic-minority families and thus show its concern for the wider community and acknowledge the significance of other faiths.

It has become difficult for a Church school not to be flattered by oversubscription, whatever the cause, especially at times of falling school rolls or pupil-led funding. The desire for a balance in social or ethnic background among pupils, even at the cost of turning away some parents who

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<sup>21</sup> Understandably the Muslim community found the government's reluctance in May 1990 to grant 'aided' status to its Islamic school in Brent incomprehensible, when that school had a thousand children on its waiting list: 'They are denying Muslim parents the rights that Christian and Jewish parents have', claimed the head, Dr Azambaig. The impression was given that the government was applying the principle of parental choice selectively.

could make a positive commitment to the school and/ or the parish, appears stronger among some diocesan administrators than among school governor practitioners.

The exercise of parental choice, enshrined in section 76 of the 1944 Act and considerably strengthened by the 1988 Education Act, has raised important questions for Church schools. The Parliamentary Private Secretary to Mr Kenneth Baker commented at a conference on the role of Church schools:

‘The parent must be getting something extra besides the level of religious instruction being conveyed in your school. I think many parents expect, for one reason or another, a higher standard of dedication amongst the staff, a higher standard of discipline in the school, and that indefinable something extra, perhaps some form of teaching that will act as a guide through the difficult years of adolescence and give the child something more to cling to than might immediately be apparent in the teaching of the State sector’. (‘The Way Ahead?’ Exchange and Culham College Institute, 17 November 1987.

i) Anglicans

When many Anglican schools are oversubscribed, the high priority in admissions criteria of regular Church attendance (87% of Church secondary schools in O’Keeffe’s 1986 survey<sup>22</sup> made this a first priority) can result in a bias toward the ‘domestic’ responsibility of the Church school; for if the majority of pupils are from practising Anglican or Christian homes, the effect on the school’s ethos, its approach to religious education and school worship, may be significantly more ‘Church-orientated’. By comparison, other Anglican schools which give a higher priority in admissions to siblings or ‘ease of access’ to the school, are placing more emphasis on the local community and are likely to admit a larger proportion of children of other

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<sup>22</sup>Culham’s 1989 survey of London diocesan primary schools confirms this high priority.

faiths if the catchment area reflects substantial ethnic minorities<sup>23</sup>. The dangers of a fragmented society, highlighted by the Archbishop's 1985 report Faith in the City, suggest that there is a clear need for Church schools to play a part in the reconciliation of different social and ethnic groups (para. 13.91). They cannot hope to do this unless they see their role as serving the community as a whole, rather than exclusively looking after their own interests as a community of faith: indeed that community of faith itself commits Christians to an openness towards those who are not members.<sup>24</sup> Many Anglican schools have followed the National Society's recommendations, in Notes for Guidance (81/5), and A Future in Partnership (1984), that oversubscribed Anglican schools should differentiate between foundation and non-foundation places, thereby retaining some balance between children committed to the local parish Church and those living nearby who have no specific Anglican affiliation but who are part of the parish's wider community. O'Keeffe's 1986 survey showed that 61% of headteachers interviewed thought such differentiation beneficial, while 29% found it unacceptable. Comments of the majority included:

'The whole purpose of Christianity is to go out to all children'. 'I do not want a monastic settlement of committed Christians'. 'Our

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<sup>23</sup>An article in the Church Times for 1 June 1990 published a feature on an Anglican primary school in Nottinghamshire with the headline: 'The Church school that turns Church children away'. The school's admissions policy had placed a higher priority on residence in the parish, time on the waiting list, and siblings at the school than on Church links or parents' desire for Christian education. The vicar, also chairman of the governors, commented: "The Church school is part of our Church life and our work, and yet the people who are the very members of our Church family cannot get their children in. But if we changed the criteria and put those people first, it would have difficulties for people who live around the school and cannot get their children in. It would be dynamite. Do they then start coming to Church just to get their children in? I think we have a real ministry to those who don't come to Church."

<sup>24</sup>Perhaps there was here an unconscious influence of William Temple's dictum that the Church is the only society to exist for the benefit of non-members.



original foundation was set up to instruct pupils in the Christian faith, not reinforce/teach those already so instructed' (p. 46-7).

It is difficult to assess with any accuracy how far such moves towards a more 'general' selection procedure were the response to State school accusations of divisiveness and selection, at a time of falling rolls. A Future in Partnership, however, offered a theological justification by suggesting the model of the Church as identified with the Suffering Servant, 'ministering rather than being ministered unto', being thrown back into the world; a Church which directs all its energies to itself is 'ceasing to be a sign of the Kingdom' (1984 p.65).

Nevertheless, 'equipping the children of the Church to take their place in the Christian community' has always been an accepted part of the Church's 'domestic' responsibility and, with so many Anglican schools closely linked to their local parish or deanery, it is hardly surprising to find admissions criteria linked to priest's references, with as one consequence that 'unseemly enthusiasm' for parish communion in the weeks preceding school applications. It is ultimately up to the aided school governors, in consultation with the LEA, to determine their own admissions criteria. The parish priest, often chairman of the governors, has a strong loyalty to his own parishioners, who are unlikely to advocate a policy of balancing 'foundation' places for Anglicans with 'non-foundation' places for others in the community if the result were to mean excluding Church-affiliated families. The additional pressures of parental right of appeal against the governors' decisions, possessed since the 1980 Education Act, have made it essential that admissions criteria are explicit, removing any powers of discretion previously exercised by governors' admissions panels and simultaneously

reinforcing the need for detailed references on family Church attendance.

O'Keeffe's 1986 survey of Anglican schools, showed that 48% of the 139 parents interviewed put Christian or Anglican education as the top priority in their choice of school, while only 28% placed academic reasons first (p. 37-8). The fact that 44% put 'academic' as their first or second priority shows that this is clearly an important issue for a substantial number of parents, but that is hardly surprising considering it is about choosing a school.

Stephen Ball argued from O'Keeffe's evidence:

'The attraction of the Church school for many parents who choose to send their children lies in image (and the reality) of the Church school as holding out the 'modalities and voice' of the lost world of the grammar school, academic reputation. What many parents seek from these schools is not, or not solely, a religiously grounded education but educational and social advantage'. (Schools for Tomorrow, ed. O'Keeffe, (1988) Falmer Press, pp. 15-16).

Such comments seem somewhat tendentious. On the one hand, they underplay the religious motive in choice; on the other hand, they cloud the fact that educational advantage is a natural objective of parents from all backgrounds.

The publicity caused by the Dewsbury parents in 1987 claiming that, for cultural rather than racial reasons, their white children ought to be transferred from one Anglican school to another, placed in sharp relief the contrast between the Church school with a predominantly white Anglican intake and the comparable Anglican school nearby whose intake reflected a substantial proportion of families from other faiths, and where the broader admissions policy was strongly defended by the local vicar (also chairman of the governors) as serving the community. The optimism of the 1970

Durham Report, The Fourth R, in suggesting that the difficulties caused by parental choice would disappear if Church schools focused on their 'general' rather than 'domestic' responsibilities (para. 526), here seemed overstated. The ensuing public debate polarised those who attacked such attitudes as 'institutional racism' (T.E.S. 9 October 1987) and those who prioritised the principle of freedom of choice (Baroness Hooper in Daily Telegraph, 16 November 1987).<sup>25</sup>

How far should response to parental choice go? Should, for example, a single-sex Anglican school in a Muslim area admit large numbers of Muslim girls whose parents require single-sex education, regardless of the possible undermining of the school's predominantly Christian ethos and support from the local Anglican parish community? Or even, as was proposed in Birmingham in 1987, should a mixed Anglican school reopen as a single-sex, multi-faith girls' school, providing a workshop of 'cooperation and creativity by different religious communities' (report in Church Times, 20 February 1987)? This latter scheme never materialised, but the debate showed that Church schools were taking seriously the challenge put out by the National Society in 1984, that the Church of England should 'return to its historic role as pioneer and seek those points within the education service where new initiatives are required' (A Future in Partnership, p.54).

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<sup>25</sup>When the D.E.S. refused to uphold the complaint of a Middlesbrough parent supported by the Commission for Racial Equality in April 1990, claiming (in the spirit of Baroness Hooper) that parental choice overrides racial considerations, deep concern was expressed by many who feared that 'the almost unlimited sway of parental preference under the Education Act could lead to racially segregated schools, which would be against the spirit of the Race Relations Act' (Tablet, 2 June 1990).

Inherent contradictions appear in the policies advocated for responding to parental choice. On the one hand, those who place no limit on admitting practising Anglican families are criticised for creating 'ghetto-type huddles'; on the other hand, those who admit families committed to other faiths, and therefore turn away practising Anglicans, could be criticised for, among other reasons, not responding to legitimate parental choice. The impression is sometimes given that turning away Anglicans is acceptable and somehow meritorious, whereas turning away Muslims is undesirable and open to the imputation of alarming hidden motives. Anglican schools, eager to face the ugly phenomenon of racism in British society, yet anxious to uphold the principle of parental choice, find themselves in some embarrassment. The Church school, which consequently finds itself with a very high proportion of Muslim children in a predominantly Asian area, may, for understandable and highminded motives, be creating only an alternative ghetto which does little or nothing to bring about greater tolerance between faith-communities.

It is all too easy to utter facile generalisations<sup>26</sup> about the effects of admissions policies. In addition to the tensions already noted, there is the local factor. While the Church school in a multi-ethnic community may find the 'non-foundation' admissions helpful in achieving more integration, another Anglican comprehensive in middle-class suburbia may wish to retain Church affiliation as a high criterion precisely with the object of drawing children from more diverse social backgrounds across a wider area, and thereby encouraging greater social reconciliation as an integral part of its

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<sup>26</sup>Such as the Bishop of Durham's remarks in the Daily Telegraph, 24 July 1986

Christian witness. The 'general' aim of Church schools in serving the nation tends to be more common in Anglican primary schools serving a specific local community than in secondary schools which usually draw children from a wider catchment area. Each governing body has to take into account social, educational, and theological considerations in formulating an admissions policy appropriate to its particular circumstances, while recognising the important influence that such a policy will inevitably have on the entire ethos of the school.

ii). Roman Catholics

The Declaration on Christian Education issued by the second Vatican Council on 28 October 1965 reiterated the importance of Catholic parents choosing Catholic education for their children, and of ensuring the availability of Catholic schools as of right. It pointed out that the aim of the Roman Catholic school was to create 'an atmosphere animated by the spirit of liberty and charity based on the Gospel' (ed. Flannery 1975 p. 732). The document left much unexplored. The pressure of other priorities, resulting in a short statement of principles in Catholic education, made it impossible for anything either radical or distinguished to be produced. The Council did not address itself to the question of the diversity of Catholic education: it passed over the purpose of education, its methods, philosophy and sociology. The document strongly stated that Christian education is 'for the world and in the world' but this was not costed out in terms of balancing the traditional purpose of educating Catholics with a Christian duty towards other children. More exactly, there was an acknowledgement, even an insistence, that Catholic schools would serve as a beacon to the wider society, but no consideration of the possibility of deliberately admitting other children to Catholic schools.

The one important new departure from previous stances was the document's emphasis on the need to recognise the Church's responsibility for the one third of Roman Catholic pupils not taught in denominational schools (para. 7). It was frankly realised that, in the world as a whole, there were insufficient Catholic schools for the Church to maintain its previous canonical position. One could not threaten Catholic parents with excommunication if there was no school for them to send their child to.

To what extent are the premises of Roman Catholic schools' admissions policies similar to those of Anglican schools in regard to Anglican children? Once a child has been baptised as a Roman Catholic, later attendance at Church is not always a necessary criterion for admission to a Catholic school unless the school is oversubscribed: a high priority is often the parents' desire for Catholic education.<sup>27</sup> As Cardinal Hume commented, 'I believe in parental choice... the right of Catholic parents to choose Catholic schools' (Address to Catholic heads in Westminster diocese, 21 September 1991). Roman Catholic schools may not be faced with the exact equivalent of the nominally Anglican family which feels it has a right to send its child to the local Anglican school because being English means being Church of England, but the 'once a Catholic, always a Catholic' rationale is not unexceptional and there are many Catholic children from non-practising families in Catholic schools.

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<sup>27</sup>The DES have based their forecasts for Catholic school places on parish baptismal register numbers. In Homsby-Smith's survey (1980), 73% of parents cited their own Catholic upbringing and the desire for a Catholic education as more influential factors in choosing a school for their children than the favoured school's ethos or academic standards.

Roman Catholics also have to address the issue of 'divisiveness' relating to their reluctance to admit non-Catholics. Like Anglican aided schools, selection on denominational criteria has led to allegations of 'divisive by definition'. An additional accusation has been that many Catholic grammar schools used to be run by religious orders, while the vast majority of Catholic children in secondary-moderns were entrusted only to the laity (letter to TES, 27 November 1992). The headteacher of a large Roman Catholic comprehensive, when asked by a visiting HMI why his exam results were better than neighbouring schools, replied, 'There are good Catholics and bad Catholics; faced with oversubscription, we only choose good Catholics!' implying the use of unofficial academic selection criteria (Eric Bolton, North of England Education Conference, Blackpool, January 1993).

Roman Catholic admissions policies came under threat in 1991-2 when one Muslim and one Hindu girl were refused admission to an oversubscribed Catholic girls' comprehensive in Tower Hamlets and took their case to court. The policy of placing the criterion of Catholic and Christian affiliation higher than parental preference was deemed unlawful since it had not been formally agreed by the LEA (required under section 6(6) of the Education Act 1980): this decision was overturned on appeal in the House of Lords (June 1992) since the school was heavily oversubscribed. The diocesan director, it might be noted, was keen to point out that the school was 'happy to offer places to non-Christian children if there are available spaces' (TES 2 October 1992).

Ann Dummett is one Roman Catholic who has positively advocated a policy wider than the normal Catholic view that their schools are primarily for

Roman Catholics. She suggested that the modern Church school, as a service provided by, rather than for, the Church, should take less cognisance of the pupils' religious affiliations. Admitting Sikh or Muslim pupils, she argued, was 'a more important service to the local community in a racist society than to admit white ones' (1981, op. cit., p.18). But she acknowledged that, there is great danger in 'prescription' and the imposition of a single formula because of the vast diversity of schools and catchment areas.

It is fair to say that there is some uncertainty and debate among Catholics about their traditional admissions policy. Cardinal Hume himself recognised that Catholics 'have much to contribute to the principles and practice of education in our society' (21 September 1991). Yet in insisting that Catholic parents should take their responsibilities seriously, he commented:

'It is not sufficient for a Catholic to choose to send their children to a Catholic school simply because that school has a good academic record or good discipline... parents should also be embracing all that the school stands for in terms of the Catholic faith and practice' (Speech to the 1st National Conference on Catholic Education, 13 July 1992).

Catholic parents send their children to Catholic schools for a host of reasons other than catechesis. In an article in the Tablet (17 August 1985) Mary Kenny even relegated 'Christian formation' to a subordinate clause, and concentrated on the importance of harmony between home and school values; and she suggested that most Catholic parents probably try to get their children admitted to Catholic schools for more practical reasons, such as impressive examination results or fewer ethnic minority pupils. Kenny's article was followed by a letter the following week bluntly suggesting that the majority paid only lip-service even to 'shared Christian values', and that it



remained the task of a minority of committed staff and parents to 'retrieve the situation and evangelise their own education system'; Mrs Anne Rogers (Tablet, 24 August 1985) drew the conclusion that the huge investment of resources in schools for motives of evangelisation and catechesis had been misplaced. Cardinal Hume, addressing headteachers in September 1991, acknowledged their difficulties:

'Many of the families from which your pupils come are lapsed. Either they do not practise their faith or it is low among their priorities... I strongly urge you never to cease to strive to win for God the minds and hearts of the young under your care nor to lose sight of what a Catholic school should be'.

There is also some evidence to suggest that Roman Catholic parents might not always be placing Catholic schools as their first choice, that their 'brand loyalty' is not holding up under market pressure. The director of the Catholic Education Service noted in 1992 that, although 90% of children in Roman Catholic primary schools were Catholics, in Catholic secondary schools it fell to 62%, a drop of 10-12% over the last decade; the figures gave him cause for concern (personal interview, June 1992). Even if much of the drop may be explicable in terms of falling rolls and attracting non-Catholic families to make good the shortfall, some of it may be due to an increase in the Catholic families who choose non-Catholic schools.

This relatively new presence of significant numbers of non-Catholic children in Catholic schools creates an interesting situation. A number of research

studies have been undertaken, particularly by Leslie Francis<sup>28</sup> in Britain, Australia and America (following on the work of Greeley and others<sup>29</sup>), to assess the influence of widening admissions on the effectiveness of a Catholic school. He identified three particular groups of pupils - practising Catholics, non-practising Catholics and non-Catholics - and noted that, while practising Catholics appreciated Catholic education, the other two groups without the congruence of home, school and parish, were not so favourably disposed: he suggested this arose from 'the incompatibility between their own religious background and the doctrinal, liturgical and catechetical assumptions of the schools'. Francis recommended two possible solutions: either the Catholic school should restrict its entry to practising Catholics, thereby strengthening 'the inculturation of the faith community' but excluding others who might benefit from Catholic educational provision; or it could recognise the contribution of the other groups and restructure its assumptions - 'far from weakening the distinctiveness of Catholic schools, such a strategy could help to secure a significant and appropriate Christian

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<sup>28</sup>e.g. Francis, L.J. (1986) 'Are Catholic schools good for non-Catholics?', Tablet 15 February; 'Roman Catholic Secondary Schools: falling rolls and pupil attitudes' in Educational Studies, vol. 12, no.2, p. 119f.

Francis, L.J. and Egan, J. (1987) 'Catholic Schools and the Communication of Faith', in Catholic School Studies, vol. 60, no.2, p.27f (USA)  
(1990) 'The Catholic School as Faith Community' in Religious Education, vol.85, no.4, p.588f (USA)

<sup>29</sup>e.g. Flynn, M.F. (1979) 'Catholic Schools and the Communication of Faith', Sydney, Society of St. Paul

O'Neill, M. (1979) 'Towards a modern concept of permeation' in Momentum 10 (May), p.48-9. (U.S.A.)

presence in education in a fast changing world' (1990 p.594).

This latter view was supported by staff at St. Philip's Sixth Form College in Birmingham when the Oratorian Fathers, as trustees, proposed in September 1992 that, because Roman Catholics amounted to less than 30% of the student body, the college would close and reopen as a 3-form entry 11-18 boys school. Although the college taught the largest number of Roman Catholics in any Birmingham sixth form, the trustees felt that the school could no longer claim to be 'Catholic'; their fear was exacerbated by new legislation which could not safeguard the college's religious identity. However the Catholic staff argued that the measure of Catholicity

'cannot simply be confined to measures of religious practice, but must take into account the spiritual life of the school as a whole, witnessed to by the majority of those who come to it'. (Tablet, 10 October 1992)

The inter-faith environment encouraged Catholics to look beyond their own interests to the needs of the community at large and (as one Muslim student at St. Philip's commented) others to learn from Catholics how to respect different religions.

Such examples throw into sharp focus the question of admission policies for Catholic schools. To what extent must they preserve or even protect their Catholic identity by reinforcing the ghetto-walls and allowing in only 'bona fide' practising Catholics who will be responsive to Catholic formation and instruction? Or, in the spirit of the main thrust of Vatican II teaching, can they open the doors to the outside world, confident in the value and contribution of their own distinctive ethos and tradition? Both for Anglicans and Roman Catholics addressing issues of admissions and parental choice,

there is a fundamental difference between a school whose main aim is to preserve and to defend and one whose mission is to witness to the world.

#### 4. Religious Education and Christian Nurture

To educate children in the Christian tradition as they have received it is the privilege and responsibility of both Anglican and Roman Catholic Church schools, enshrined in the legislation of 1944. But to what extent should such education nowadays be 'denominational'? Should it imply for example that a prime objective is to make Anglican children aware of what distinguishes their Church from, say, Roman Catholicism, or vice versa?<sup>30</sup>

The Roman Catholic Church has traditionally held the view, without apology, that its schools exist to teach Roman Catholic faith and morals to Roman Catholic children: the schools are the vehicle of catechetical instruction intended to bring the pupils to faith. Although Roman Catholic theologians would say that a proposition is defined by the Church because it is true, not true because defined by the Church, nevertheless the principal emphasis in school catechesis lay in the passing on of what authority had defined.

Many Anglican schools have reflected no less a conviction that Christian nurture through the schools is integral to their role of serving the Church by encouraging Christian commitment, based upon proper knowledge and

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<sup>30</sup>A certain sensitivity about the content of religious education in Church of England schools is much older than the last half-century. In 1818 Jeremy Bentham's highly rhetorical work, Church of Englandism, hurled invective against any use of the Catechism in the Prayer Book, mainly on the ground that its teaching on the sacraments is indistinguishable from 'Romish superstition'.

understanding<sup>31</sup>. Just as Roman Catholic schools would be unlikely to have hesitations about the importance of teaching their pupils the meaning of baptism or eucharist, so also Anglican schools ought not to be reticent, whether about the sacraments or the Gospel or about providing specific instruction in the essentials of faith and Christian morality. The pupils' spiritual development is best nurtured within a particular faith-community. 'Religion is caught rather than taught' (W.R. Inge).<sup>32</sup> If there are strong links to the local parish Church, the school may be able to enrich the pupils' experience by encouraging participation in worship and exposition of the tenets that give form to religious faith. Indeed the expectation of many parish priests is that the local Church school will be responding to the priest's investment in the school of much time and parishioners' money by encouraging pupils to be active participants in parish worship on Sundays. An unhappy obverse tendency is for a parish priest to blame the Church secondary school when the pupils from his parish turn away from the Church in adolescence and treat their confirmation as a rite of passage signifying

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<sup>31</sup> During the debate in the General Synod in 1985 a delegate from the diocese of Chester, anxious that Anglican schools should be clear about their purpose, sought to table an amendment requiring Anglican Church schools to provide a 'definite and distinctive Christian environment, including a Christian education as reflected in the Church's creeds and historic formularies'. (Kerfoot, J. in Proceedings of the General Synod, 16,2 (July 1985) p.656). His amendment was rejected because his claim that the Church of England's role in education was 'uniquely significant' was considered by the Bishop of London to be unjust to schools of other Christian denominations.

<sup>32</sup> Speculum Animae (1911) p.38. Inge continues: 'It is the religious teacher, not the religious lesson, that helps the pupil to believe'.

their abandonment rather than their acceptance of their baptismal contract.<sup>33</sup>

Expectations at the local level are echoed in national debate. The Earl of Arran, a Conservative whip speaking on behalf of the government in the parliamentary debate on 26 February 1988, commented that the option of sending children to aided denominational schools was open to parents who 'wish to have exclusively Christian education' (Hansard, col.1484), and 'specifically want their children to participate in an entirely Christian act of worship' (ibid. col. 1495). The implication is clear: parents expecting an explicitly Christian nurture could and should turn to Church schools.

The results of Leslie Francis' research of 1986, Partnership in Rural Education (London, Collins), however, questioned the effectiveness of Anglican schools in nurturing their pupils, and indicated that children educated in Roman Catholic schools or even some county schools were likely to have a more informed and favourable attitude to Christianity. It seemed almost as if teachers in Anglican schools had become so hesitant and, in the pejorative sense apologetic about expressing their Christian values and convictions, that the effect was more to inoculate than to nurture their pupils. Roman Catholic schools which uninhibitedly emphasised their commitment to their faith-community appeared to gain a higher degree of response and commitment from their pupils. If so, it could readily be argued

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<sup>33</sup>This phenomenon can, of course, be found throughout Europe, and is not confined to Anglican situations. Leslie Francis' research (1985) Rural Anglicanism, Collins, noted that the majority of Anglican clergy visited their local schools to take assemblies, but he regretted that too many Anglican clergy appointments are made to benefices containing Church schools without reference to the person's ability or interest in education (p.99).

that Anglican schools ought to be more explicit in teaching their faith.<sup>34</sup>

O'Keeffe commented in her 1986 survey that if the R.E. teacher in an Anglican Church school

'is not explicitly teaching for commitment on the part of the pupils, then R.E. will not differ significantly from that provided in county schools: one justification for Church schools would then be called in question' (p.117).

This comment carries the assumption that Church schools should consider 'teaching for commitment' as appropriate in R.E. classes, an assumption by no means shared by all Christian educationists, Anglican or Catholic. A submerged ambiguity needs to be brought to the surface. A teacher of R.E. is not a preacher or an evangelist: the primary task is to inform, to bring to the pupils an awareness of historical facts, of moral and philosophical debates that have engaged the greatest minds, of the social as well as the individual significance of religious allegiance. Education is like an initiation into a journey of discovery in which both teacher and pupils cooperate and evaluate progress together.

'Such a philosophy of education presents those committed to teaching a revealed religion with quite new and special problems'. (1981) Signposts and Homecomings, p. 12.

Both Anglicans and Roman Catholics face similar questions in considering their approach to issues of pedagogy, religious education, nurture and catechetics. Should the phenomenological and confessional approaches to RE be categorically distinguished or do the assumptions inherent in such a

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<sup>34</sup>In an article in The Times of 16 December 1987, the Revd. Dr Edward Norman commented that 'there is a groundswell sense that religious education should be precise, recognisable, unadulterated...faithful belief in exact truths'.

polarisation in recent years 'betray the poverty of our thinking'?<sup>35</sup> The long overdue rapprochement between the two<sup>36</sup> may provide the opportunity to develop an RE programme which draws on the strengths of each, a model for which may already be found in joint Anglican/Roman Catholic schools.

i) Anglicans

Religious education in Anglican schools 'will be of the highest possible quality'.... it 'may enable children to come to understand more fully what they believe'... but 'religious nurture is the task of the parents and faith communities'. (Lankshear, D. (1992) A Shared Vision, National Society p.52).

This comment from the Church of England Schools Officer reflects both policy and practice in most Anglican schools, the majority of which are 'controlled' and therefore legally required to teach their LEA Agreed RE syllabus. Even in 'aided' schools, where the RE programme is in accordance with the Trust deeds and diocesan guidelines, the priority is to ensure good quality RE teaching and learning, rather than to nurture pupils into Anglican doctrine.

'As in other areas of the curriculum, children and young people will be encouraged to develop attitudes of openness and enquiry and to engage in a search for truth. In this way they will come to understand what they believe and... enter into the joys and challenges of an adult Christian faith'.<sup>37</sup>

An education which is content-based and primarily concerned with the

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<sup>35</sup>Nicola Slee (1989) op. cit.

<sup>36</sup>Advocated by John Hull (1984), Nicola Slee (1989) et alia in Francis, L.J. and Thatcher, A. (eds.) (1990) Christian Perspectives for Education, Fowler Wright.

<sup>37</sup>cf. Lankshear, D. (1992) Looking for Quality in a Church School, National Society, p.10. Interestingly, St Augustine's little tract 'On catechizing the uneducated' differentiated catechism from ordinary education in literature with the observation that learning by heart was inappropriate in teaching the faith, whereas it was normal in other subjects.



transmission of ready-made formulae and solutions, may be unlikely to focus also on the process of bringing out the pupil's capacity to learn with understanding and personal autonomy.<sup>38</sup> A contrast is often unconsciously assumed by which Christianity (or, for that matter, Judaism or Islam) is a religion of revelation and authority given by God and therefore is to be blindly received by the believer as a totality, whereas educating people is initiating them into a lifelong process of growth, development, and change.<sup>39</sup> That the matter cannot be so simple is evident from the immense amount of discussion in Christian history about the notion of change and development in the understanding and formulation of doctrine: Newman's Essay on Development of 1845 is only the most famous classic treatment of the subject in English.

John Hull has reasonably argued that a polarization of nurture and education is misleading and fallacious, since both Christian nurture and religious education require a degree of 'critical openness', for the former to ensure the continued vitality and relevance of Christian faith, for the latter to encourage people to think for themselves as autonomous individuals.<sup>40</sup> As far back as

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<sup>38</sup>cf. Capaldi, G.I. in Francis, L. and Thatcher, A. eds. (1990) op. cit. p.69.

<sup>39</sup> The entire question is examined in a wide context by Owen Chadwick, (1957) From Bossuet to Newman, Cambridge, 2nd ed. 1988. In his 1852 lectures on The Idea of a University, (new edition by Ker, I.T. (1976) Oxford) Newman rejected as intolerable the submissive learning by rote and dictation in which the pupil is merely passive. Serious education means that people learn to use their minds, to weigh evidence, to see inner connections (cf. Discourse 6).

<sup>40</sup>Hull (1984) op. cit., chapter 18.

1976, the British Council of Churches<sup>41</sup> attempted to tackle these questions in The Child in the Church, advocating a theology in which critical openness is inherent in Christian commitment (para. 44).

‘Christian nurture occupies a middle position between closed and authoritative instruction on the one hand, and open enquiring education on the other’ (57). ‘Christian growth is not a matter of simply taking over the tradition...but rather of responding to what is offered’ (73). ‘Christian faith is constantly critical of itself... There is no fixed form of nurture into it’ (60). ‘What we pass on to our children is not the painting but the paint box’ (63).

In 1981 the British Council of Churches developed these ideas further in Understanding Christian Nurture. While recognising the importance of Christian doctrine, the Church is not seen as issuing commands as if it embodied power, but as a community informing the conscience and providing a moral and spiritual atmosphere, an ethos of values rather than a sharply defined system of dogmas (paras. 59,287).

For Church schools reassessing their approach to Christian nurture, the school’s contribution cannot be seen in isolation. The Anglican school may in practice achieve little in bringing about the moral formation of its pupils unless the individual pupil concerned is also within the Christian community. It cannot of itself be left to communicate religion and moral virtue. In the triangle formed by home, Church, and school, the task of the school, including the Church school, is education. In comparison with home and Church, school will always be an inefficient instrument for specific religious or moral instruction, for which it can at best be only supportive. This is not to suggest that this support will be unimportant, but rather that home and

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<sup>41</sup>The BCC included representatives from the mainstream Protestant Churches. Roman Catholics, although not part of the BCC, became full members of its successor body ‘Churches Together in England’ and its regional counterparts.

parish must be the primacy locus for faith development. The point is sharply made by the Anglican Bishop of Blackburn, Alan Chesters, that while the Church school has some responsibility to involve children in the worshipping life of the Church, 'only in the home can Christian parents be sure that a child is nurtured for Christ'.<sup>42</sup>

This is a perspective which does not diminish the responsibility of the Church school to be and to be felt to be Christian, but merely removes the unrealistic expectations of those who think such a school fails if it does not produce a body of practising Anglicans. In this researcher's experience,<sup>43</sup> nothing is more damaging to the intellectual standing of religious education and to the open relationship between teacher and pupil than undue pressure which produces instinctive resistance and even long-lasting prejudice against religion.

Religious education concerns an area of human life, thought, and action where a commitment involving the entire personality of the individual is never far from the surface. It follows that there is a stronger consciousness here than in some other areas of the curriculum that unexamined prejudices can influence presentation, and this can invite the accusation of indoctrination. This is taken to mean, first, that the content of what is taught rests on assumptions and evidence which are not generally accepted as unshakeably true; secondly that in inculcating belief it tends to appeal to authority rather

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<sup>42</sup>His paper of 1988 is in Christian Perspectives in Education, Francis, L. and Thatcher, A. eds. (1990), op.cit., p.290.

<sup>43</sup>A view shared by Michael Donley, 'Teaching Discernment' in Watson, B., ed. (1992) Priorities for Religious Education, Falmer Press, p.188-9

than rational methods of inquiry; thirdly, that the teacher has the conscious intention of persuading the children to accept particular beliefs irrespective of the evidence or argument, and this inhibits their development as autonomous persons with critical powers. Edwin Cox has written that

‘teaching, however well intended, which closes minds to cogent considerations and to valid arguments, as indoctrination does, ought not to have a place in any establishment which claims to give education’.<sup>44</sup>

The suspicion of indoctrination cannot be confined to Church schools. If in county schools there is a prevailing secular humanism claiming to adopt a value-free neutrality based on objective and rational thinking, it would be naïve to suppose that this is immune from the charge of indoctrination. A balanced view of the world accepts the validity of emotional and intuitive sensitiveness or individual interpretations of literature, for example, even though a scientific rationalism may be dismissive of these phenomena. There is also a powerful indoctrinating pressure on young people from the peer group<sup>45</sup> and from the media. The ‘hidden curriculum’, through which pupils absorb the sense of values that will stay with them for life, is often more deeply influential, (in spite of its lack of quantitative accountability), than the overt curriculum published in the daily timetable.

Through this minefield, Edwin Cox outlined three ways for RE to move

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<sup>44</sup>(1983) Problems and Possibilities for Religious Education, Hodder & Stoughton, p.106. See also e.g. Mitchell, B.G. (1970), Appendix B, The Fourth R, SPCK, p.353-8; Hull (1984) op. cit. p.103; Thiessen, E. in Francis, L. and Thatcher, A. eds. (1990) op. cit. p. 215f.; and Watson, B., ed. (1992) op. cit. pp.17,6,7,128

<sup>45</sup>A classic psychological analysis of the influence of the peer group in the second book of St. Augustine’s Confessions on his adolescent gang who stole pears: ‘Alone I would never have done it’ (viii, 16).

forward (1983, p.108): firstly, the need to mark a distinction between facts and beliefs, so that, when exploring the latter, pupils learn to respect views and judgements which they may not share themselves; secondly, the recognition of our pluralist culture in which differing beliefs can be examined sympathetically and openly; thirdly, an awareness of the possible influence of the teacher's own beliefs upon the presentation of the subject-matter. He also warned against the opposite danger that, in an effort to avert any charge of indoctrination, the R.E. teacher may resort to a sterile teaching of dry facts and lose 'the sense of adventure and commitment which is characteristic of religion' (p.109).

Is it possible for the personally committed teacher to 'distinguish between his own enthusiasm for a subject and attempts to persuade pupils into one way of life rather than another'?<sup>46</sup> Or might the seriously searching agnostic do a better job by sharing in the pupils' inquiry and quest? Since Edward Hulmes' book, (1979) Commitment and Neutrality in Religious Education (Chapman), the pendulum seems to have swung away from detached neutrality towards recognising that all teachers, whether of religion, science or technology, can prove most effective when their personal interest and commitment inspires the children to become actively involved in the learning process. The 'search for a faith by which to live' is more likely to be taken seriously if convictions are acknowledged and respected. Greater toleration and understanding are encouraged by 'a frank declaration of commitment and

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<sup>46</sup>cf. Sealey, J. (1985) Religious Education: Philosophical Perspectives, Allen & Unwin, p. 74.

an open recognition of continuing religious and philosophical differences'.<sup>47</sup> Hulmes has also argued that 'commitment is both the point of departure and the final goal of religious education. The seeking, the questing, the finding, the revising are all stages in commitment' (1979, p.87). The teacher's sense of commitment is therefore a factor in moving the pupil to take religion seriously.

Proselytising may be inappropriate in the classroom in Church schools. But they have a right to capitalise on the teacher's personal commitment so as to encourage their pupils to explore religious and moral issues across all aspects of the curriculum (e.g. in literature or history), and at the same time to enrich their understanding of their own faith through a genuine encounter with religious beliefs as practised by many of the children coming from families of other world faiths. Those pupils, who already know from inside something of what religion is about, have a springboard from which they can sympathetically look at beliefs and practices of other faiths.

One problem for the teaching of religion in Anglican schools emerges from the relative elusiveness of Anglican teaching in a climate of misty liberalism. With exceptions among particular groups of well instructed clergy and laity, it is not characteristic of a large number of Anglicans to be strongly aware of what their faith is in contrast with that of other Christian bodies, or at least to be able to state with any accuracy and precision what makes Anglicans

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<sup>47</sup>Hulmes, E. in Cole, O. ed. (1978) World Faiths in Education, Allen & Unwin. Edwin Cox has a comparable comment that the teachers' confident but unaggressive belief should be matched with 'a commitment to the belief that genuine study and critical search for understanding will lead to truth' (1983) p.56.

different from Roman Catholics or Baptists.<sup>48</sup> However, the recent revisions of agreed syllabuses have encouraged more RE textbooks which provide useful accounts of belief and practice in different Christian denominations.<sup>49</sup>

There are Anglican schools which see themselves as primarily serving the local community rather than serving the Church of England, and these may be drawn more to general religious and moral education in preference to specific Anglican instruction. Because Anglican schools have usually had a more 'general' focus than Roman Catholic schools, the debate on an appropriate approach to RE has not seemed dissimilar from that in county schools, particularly in relation to indoctrination and nurture. One RE teacher in

O'Keeffe's 1986 survey suggested

'it is much easier in Roman Catholic schools - their schools are for Catholic children. Our schools have to cope with materialist youngsters from materialist homes' (p.99).

Where Church schools have a high proportion of Muslim pupils for example, the question presses whether it is appropriate to provide Christian education at all, or whether it is right to adopt a general theistic approach, exploring areas of common belief between Christianity and Islam. By working with themes that are characteristically but not distinctively Christian, yet avoiding the accusation of multi-faith 'mishmash', the teacher may promote

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<sup>48</sup>No doubt that is partly a consequence of the absence of polemic from the Anglican classic, The Book of Common Prayer with the appended Ordinal, where defensive frontiers against alternatives are not marked in providing a way of worship for the English at prayer. The Thirty-nine Articles contain more polemic, as much against Baptists as against Roman Catholics, but with a very sharp censure of the notion that 'every man shall be saved by the law or sect which he professes' (Article XVIII).

<sup>49</sup>e.g. The Chichester Project materials published by Lutterworth Press.

mutual respect and understanding in the local community. In the Church Times (20 February 1987) the Director of Education for the Anglican diocese of Birmingham commented on this:

‘The Church of England has never been, and is not, in education to make a denominational point, but rather nowadays to contribute to, and perhaps influence, the whole. Church of England schools play an important role in multi-ethnic and multi-faith areas in bringing the religious communities face to face, dispelling ignorance and prejudice, and so enabling non-Christian children to gain a more positive outlook on Christianity’.<sup>50</sup>

By contrast this ‘open’ approach was unacceptable to the Vicar of St Matthew’s Church, Blackburn, who resigned as chairman of governors of his Church primary school because he could not rely on diocesan support, or that of other governors, for his proposal that Muslim parents ought to agree to their children receiving some instruction in Christianity if they were admitted to the school (T.E.S., 21 June 1986). The view of the Blackburn diocese was also found reflected by teachers of religious education: for example, one teacher from a school where 85% of the pupils came from Christian homes said:

‘Most pupils do not have a personal faith. It is the job of the Church. The school is not a pew-filler for the Church of England. Religious Studies is an academic subject’ (O’Keeffe (1986) p.99).<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup>See also Meakin, D. (1988) British Journal of Religious Education, vol. 10, no. 2: RE has a significant role in ‘fostering tolerance’.

<sup>51</sup>It is often assumed that for county schools teaching for religious commitment is inappropriate. Yet O’Keeffe’s 1986 survey also showed that as many as 18% of R.E. teachers in county schools saw their task as Christian nurture and their school as ‘a Christian community as much as a Church school would be’ (p.118). Surprisingly, 36% of county schools understood their approach to religious education to be ‘confessional’, while 55% of Church schools considered their approach to be open-ended in ‘enabling pupils to become aware of the relevance of a religious interpretation to life’. Such varieties of approach suggest that there is considerable diversity in interpreting the role of Christian nurture in schools in general.



The national debate on the curriculum has been gathering momentum since 1988, and Church schools should be in a position to take a lead in the development of the 'spiritual' dimension within the curriculum. As the National Society has said:

'In a society which generally preaches a secular materialistic ethic, particularly through the media and commercial activity, some form of positive discrimination in favour of the religious dimension of life is required in curricular provision in schools' (A Future in Partnership, 1984, p.81).

In the 1989 Culham survey of Church primary schools in the diocese of London, one headteacher described the role of the Anglican school as

'witness in its wider sense. The state system is either secular or too multi-faith to have a clear message...While not seeking to evangelize, it is hoped that children will look back on their school days with pleasure and regard the Church as significant in their lives and grow up with a sense of God as their heavenly Father. A deeper faith than this is the responsibility of the Church, not the school' (p.11).

A Church school R.E. teacher in O'Keeffe's 1986 survey took up the challenge:

'I am not trying to turn out good Anglicans, but to show them that a religious outlook on life is still a viable option in the twentieth century' (op. cit. p.96).

The Anglican school which succeeds in this aim could be said to have scored a noteworthy achievement.

## ii) Roman Catholics

By contrast with Anglican schools, the task of the Catholic school has traditionally been explicit catechetical instruction, ensuring that by the time children leave they have already moved beyond first communion and confirmation; in short, by the time they reach the 'outside world', they are signed up Church members. However we shall see that in recent years a

number of influential Catholic educationists in England have also manifested a certain hesitation about the appropriateness of the catechetical role for today's Catholic schools.

The traditional catechism based on the Creed, the Seven Sacraments and the Ten Commandments was modified in the 1960s as interest increased in the biblical and liturgical movements rooted in the traditions of the early Church and reflected in the work of theologians such as Jungmann. By the late 1970s, the shift to a more 'implicit' approach can be seen in the development of an 'experiential' or 'incarnational' model of catechetics, (cf. O'Leary, 1982) not dissimilar to the 'implicit' phase of British RE and influenced by the theology of Gabriel Moran. The Veritas catechetical programme also incorporated much of Kohlberg's work on moral development. At the same time, the increasingly positive view of the contribution of other Christian Churches and world faiths, alongside the developments in liberation theology, encouraged Roman Catholic teachers to broaden their understanding and experience of approaches to religious education, and theological developments in Europe and America: the work of Kevin Nichols in reassessing the appropriateness of catechetics to the British RE classroom was also highly influential in the 1980s. However, the tensions between those who want a return to more traditional catechetics and the many Catholic RE teachers who have adopted a more pupil-centred approach to RE, seem to have returned to 'haunt' the debates of the early 1990s.

In 1979 Pope John Paul II declared:

'The school provides catechesis with possibilities that are not to be

neglected'. A Catholic school would no longer deserve this title if 'there were justification for reproaching it for negligence or deviation in strictly religious education. Let it not be said that such education will always be given implicitly and indirectly. The special character of the Catholic school, the underlying reason for it, the reason why Catholic parents should prefer it, is precisely the quality of the religious instruction integrated into the education of the pupils'. Catechesis in our time, 69.

At the same time the family was clearly recognised by Catholic authority as the place in which catechesis had to be rooted. The school was not expected to take over this role from the parents, nor should the parents expect the school to do so, however inadequately trained they may feel. The parish had to support the parents in their difficult task.<sup>52</sup> Pope John Paul II stated: 'Family catechesis precedes, accompanies and enriches all forms of catechesis' (para. 68).

In the statement The Catholic School (1977), issued under the authority of the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, this idea was developed:

'It is recognised that the proper place for catechesis is the family helped by other Christian communities, especially the local parish'. But the importance and need for catechetical instruction in Catholic schools cannot be sufficiently emphasised. Here young people are helped to grow towards maturity in faith' (para. 51).<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup>This view is restated by Cardinal Hume, (1988) Towards a Civilisation of Love, Hodder and Stoughton, p.107

<sup>53</sup>Among the major statements coming from Rome since Vatican II, the General Catechetical Directory (1971) surprisingly discussed children's catechesis with scarcely a reference to Roman Catholic schools as having a part to play. It focused rather on the role of parents and of trained catechists. Either the document took it for granted that trained catechists would work among young people within their schools and so did not mention the matter, or else perhaps we may infer that the Sacred Congregation for the Clergy had come to consider catechesis to be appropriate primarily for the parish and the home.

The relationship between religious education and catechesis is further discussed in Moran, G. (1989) Religious Education as a Second Language, REP, p.157

How have Roman Catholic educationists attempted to apply general principles from Rome and Westminster to the reality of British classrooms? If catechesis is a 'dialogue between believers', and presupposes faith (however immature) on the part of the catechumen, to what extent is it appropriate, when even among Roman Catholic pupils it is doubtful whether personal belief can or should be presumed any longer? While committed Catholic parents will send their children to Catholic schools<sup>54</sup>, the pupils themselves may not necessarily share that commitment, and cannot have it forced upon them. A captive audience is no guarantee of successful catechesis; in fact, the result is only too likely to be a generation of lapsed Catholics (as prophesied by Dr Jack Dominian in The Tablet, 31 August 1985).

Roman Catholic educationists have therefore had to reassess the place of catechesis in education, guided by the work of theologians such as Jungmann<sup>55</sup>, and Moran.<sup>56</sup> A certain progression in this questioning over time can be observed, particularly by surveying the views of three

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<sup>54</sup>Yet in their 1977 survey of Roman Catholic opinion, undertaken by the University of Surrey, Hornsby-Smith and Lee found that of the 31.5% of parents who chose Catholic schools for their children because they wanted to 'ground them in the faith', some 20% rarely or never attended Mass.

<sup>55</sup>(1936) The Good News and Our Proclamation of the Faith, criticised contemporary catechetics for its narrow doctrinal focus, advocating a return to the early apostolic Church's 'kerygmatic' theology. See also Karl Rahner (ed.) (1968) Sacramentum Mundi London/New York: catechesis is 'the proclamation of the word of God in view of the education of man to faith' (I, 263 f.)

<sup>56</sup>(1967) God still speaks, Burns & Oates, criticised the traditional catechists' appeal through 'sentimentality and fear' (p.42) and argued that their task 'is not the divine task of saving children, but rather the human task of freeing men for life in the Spirit by awakening intelligence and freedom'. See also Rahner, K. (1965) 'The Christian Teacher' in Theology for Renewal (p.79) New York, Sheed and Ward, p.117; Moran, G. (1966) Catechesis and Revelation, New York (p.135) and (1968) Visions and Tactics, London (p.13).

successive National Advisers to the Catholic Bishops on Catechesis.

In the late 1970s Mgr Kevin Nichols, the first National Adviser, published two influential books, Cornerstone (1978) and Orientations (1979), St. Paul Publications. He recognised the dilemma of attempting to catechise pupils in Catholic schools when many were clearly at the pre-catechetical stage; but he resisted the temptation to polarise the roles of religious education and catechesis.<sup>57</sup> Rather he insisted that

‘religious education is a particular mode or style of catechesis. It is the educational mode, the one which stresses the development of understanding, analysis, and thoughtfulness in faith. There is no essential reason why religious education properly so called should not go on within a community of faith such as our Church’ (15). ‘Catechesis can take an educational form which respects freedom, encourages growth and personal development’ (26) Cornerstone.

The catechist, in handing on a living tradition of faith, must make it relevant to the pupils allowing them ‘free adherence to God in faith’. At the same time, other elements of catechesis will be present in a Church school through ‘the quality of relationships and pastoral care, the school community and its liturgy’ (p.20) Orientations.

The 1981 report to the Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales, Signposts and Homecomings, (produced by a three year study group chaired by Bishop David Konstant<sup>58</sup>) made no attempt to define religious education or catechesis, sensing perhaps that Nichols had already attempted that for them. It acknowledged the use of ‘religious education’ when speaking of ‘some formal process of learning and instruction’, and ‘catechesis’ when emphasising ‘the development of faith itself’ (p.25). But it recognised that

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<sup>57</sup>See also Nichols, K. in Watson, B. ed. (1992) op. cit., p.116f.

<sup>58</sup>Chairman of the Catholic Education and Formation Council and involved in preparing the English text of the new Universal Catechism first promulgated in December 1992.

‘for Catholics traditionally the idea of handing on the faith in its cultural context has been an overriding educational aim. The notion of promoting critical reflection in pupils seems at odds with this, for it would encourage questioning rather than loyalty to tradition’ (p.65).

The report went on to suggest that RE, like catechesis, is part of the process of inducting pupils into a way of life, which in a Catholic context will of course be Catholic,<sup>59</sup> and argued for a higher priority for adult catechesis.

While the new directions of Vatican II were clearly discernible in this document, there were doubts however that the report could offer constructive and realistic assistance to the classroom teacher caught between the apparently conflicting demands of catechesis and RE<sup>60</sup>. Roman Catholic views on this central subject were already beginning to shift from thinking of classroom RE as explicit catechesis, or vice versa, to a position more attuned to the reality facing the teacher. Catechetical instruction presupposes faith,

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<sup>59</sup>To paraphrase the document’s development of this point:

Catholic education has to reflect four elements to ensure ‘the opportunity to grow towards responsible freedom according to the mind of Christ’ (p.121). Firstly, a perspective - centred on faith in Christ as Saviour of all men - is essential and among other ways may be given in explicit religious teaching. Secondly, a deep respect for the individuality and integrity of all human beings must allow room for personal growth and development. Thirdly, Catholic education recognises ‘that all men and women without exception are the children of God and included in the scope of Christ’s redemptive love’. Fourthly, ‘education is part of the Church’s mission to the world, perpetuating the salvific work of Christ.’

<sup>60</sup>Paul Hirst’s attempt to distinguish these respectively as the ‘primitive’ and ‘sophisticated’ views of education may have been expressed too sharply, yet he argued ‘Somehow the distinction (that is, between believing and reasoning) must be got over so that pupils grasp the objective necessity for accepting the conclusions of reason and the voluntary commitment that alone is appropriate in the face of claims on one’s faith’. Thus religious education, proceeding from the stance of reason, can prepare the ground from which a pupil may of his or her own free will move towards catechesis. (1981) ‘Education, Catechesis and the Church School’ in the British Journal of Religious Education, vol. 3 no.2 and (1974) Moral Education in Secular Society, University of London p.80. However, it might be suggested that his approach is equally appropriate for priest, parent or Sunday school teacher. As we have noted above, John Hull argued that Christian theology and educational theory should not be polarised (1976) British Journal of Educational Studies, vol. 24, no.2.

and should be a voluntary activity if conducted within denominational schools: the Catholic school will want to support catechesis in the parish (RE teachers may even be involved in the classes outside school hours), and students may attend in their own time voluntarily. This minimises any confusion deriving from the juxtaposition of catechesis and RE on the timetable, and allows each to develop along its own lines.<sup>61</sup> They could both still be regarded as 'education in a Christian context', but from the pupils' point of view, the 'handing down of a living tradition' to nurture faith would be distinguishable from a more general study of religion, which we have noted is normally characteristic of much RE in Anglican schools.

This distinction is worrying to some Roman Catholics. Paddy Walsh of the London Institute put it in an acute form:

'If ever we who are Catholics did come to accept a sharp form of this distinction (between education and catechesis), we should have lost a large part of our rationale for having Catholic schools'. (O'Leary, D. ed. (1983) Religious Education and Young Adults, St. Paul Publications, p.12).

If the language seems strong, it is defended and justified by the considerations that nurture in Christian truth and relationships is a profound educational experience for the pupils, that schools are better staffed than parish catechetical classes could ever be, and that nurturing RE should have a mutually enriching effect on other subjects in the curriculum.

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<sup>61</sup> 'The parish is in essence the principal catechetical centre...our expectations of home and school have been unrealistic' (Sector E Report of the National Pastoral Congress 'Liverpool 1980', (1981) St. Paul Publications, p. 213f. ). The Bishops' Report continued: 'What can be expected of a Catholic school are a knowledge and understanding of the content of the faith, the experience of a Christian caring community and the experience of a living liturgy' (The Easter People, para. 136). Lay Catholics in Schools (1982) emphasised that 'the teaching of the Catholic religion, distinct from and at the same time complementary to catechesis... ought to form a part of the curriculum in every school' (para.56).

‘The good Church school will be quite simple and straightforward about having as its ideal the nurturing in its pupils of a faith in God and in Christ that is explicit, clear, intelligent, articulate, open-minded and sincere’ (p.13).

At the same time, it will ‘respect the unbelievers and searchers in its own midst - and that goes also for teachers in this position’; it will avoid indoctrination by encouraging freedom of speech and acknowledging ‘the validity of non-commitment’ (p.14).

It must be a question whether these comments did not presuppose the time when Catholic schools were comparatively easy to fill with committed Catholic teachers and pupils.<sup>62</sup> Signposts and Homecomings (p.32) showed that in maintained Catholic secondary schools in 1980, 33.6% of all staff were non-Catholic, in independent Catholic schools 34.6%<sup>63</sup>. Of course the proportion of Catholic RE staff is likely to be higher, but the Vatican has not traditionally singled out RE in this way, insisting instead that the whole curriculum should reflect Catholic teaching. Moreover, evidence suggests that the explicit confessional environment has come, at least in some cases, to antagonise rather than to nurture. Hornsby-Smith’s 1977 survey of ‘Roman Catholic Opinion’ showed that 32% of those questioned who would not choose a Roman Catholic schools for themselves if given a second chance, gave as their reason ‘too much emphasis on religion’: 23% felt that Catholic schools were ‘too much of a closed community’, ‘too narrow’, or even ‘too bigoted’,

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<sup>62</sup>Further criticism of Walsh’s views is found in McLaughlin, T. (1992) Christian Education and Schooling, a paper to the Stapleford House Conference (4 January 1992)

<sup>63</sup>A two to one majority is no doubt substantial; but the figures point to increasing difficulty in finding practising Catholics to teach in these schools; in 1970 it was 26.3% in maintained Catholic schools.



perhaps reflecting the more indoctrinatory approach of the past.

The same 1977 survey also revealed that the majority considered religious education to be the responsibility of the parents, not of the school.<sup>64</sup> Furthermore, while just over a third of those questioned thought that Catholics should be taught in separate schools, significantly just under half thought they should not be segregated.<sup>65</sup> These half-articulate feelings raise the issue whether catechetics should still be the foundation stone on which a Catholic school is constructed. As we have already noted, the isolationism too often implicit in the traditional idea of handing on the faith and avoiding contamination by the secular (or the Protestant or the Anglican) world, must be viewed as outdated, especially in the light of the changed Catholic self-consciousness since Vatican II.<sup>66</sup>

Nichol's successor as National Adviser, Patrick Purnell SJ, faced up more fully to the reality that more and more parents remain uncommitted; since

'many of them send their children to Catholic school for non-religious reasons...faith-sharing is no longer possible'. In the Catholic school, 'dignity and freedom are threatened where pupils are told by an authority (which they are taught to accept and respect by the cultural context of their lives) what to believe...Hence the classroom is not the right setting for deliberately evangelising pupils nor is it the place

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<sup>64</sup>Of the 74% who agreed with this, 18% agreed strongly; of the 11.4% who disagreed, only 1% disagreed strongly.

<sup>65</sup>From the latter group, a major reason given was that the system of formal religious socialisation is less important in an increasingly secular world, where religion is now considered by many to be mainly a private individual matter. Others went further, suggesting that the religious divisions perpetuated by separate Catholic education ought to be removed.

<sup>66</sup>See *Gaudium et Spes*, 40f. The storm of protest which at Vatican I greeted Bishop Strossmayer's declaration that there were Protestants who truly loved God would be unthinkable a century later.

where catechesis occurs' (1985) Our Faith Story, Collins, (p.73-5).

His more liberal, implicit approach to religious education in schools encouraged respect for individual autonomy, knowledge and understanding of religious tradition and an appreciation of the experience of faith.

These issues were taken up by his successor as coordinator of the National Project of Catechesis and Religious Education, Jim Gallagher. In his 1986 Guidelines: Living and Sharing our Faith, he set out the bishops' priorities: to help adults<sup>67</sup> mature in Christian faith; to create a greater partnership between home, parish and school in catechesis and religious education; and to clarify the roles of parents, teachers, priests, catechists and others (p.7). He noted that RE, catechesis and evangelisation were distinct<sup>68</sup> (even if in practice they might overlap) and that the emphasis had shifted from the exclusive view to a broader understanding of catechetics as a life-long process of education in faith, involving the whole community (p.17).

In Our Schools and Our Faith ( 1988, Collins), Gallagher explained

'we are concerned to justify the existence of our schools on sound pastoral and educational grounds. We wish to uphold their Catholic character in ways which enable us to offer a distinctive yet genuine form of education for all pupils who attend our schools and which respects the gifts of all members of staff' (p.10)...Religious education is not primarily concerned with maturing and developing Christian faith. Its aim is to help people to be aware of and appreciate the

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<sup>67</sup>Gallagher's colleague Damian Lundy developed this in his Ph.D. thesis (Manchester 1990) on 'Adult Catechesis in the Roman Catholic Church in Britain since the Second Vatican Council'.

<sup>68</sup>e.g. RE for school classrooms, catechesis for adult voluntary groups and evangelisation for baptism preparation classes for lapsed parents respectively. This connection/distinction was endorsed by the Vatican in (1988) The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School, para. 68.

religious dimension of life and the way this has been expressed in religious traditions. It should at the same time encourage people to examine their own religious attitudes and to respect those of others' (p.12f).

To assist RE teachers, the Project produced a 'basic framework' for RE (rather than a teaching programme), entitled Weaving the Web (1988) Lohan, R. and McClure, M. (Collins) for 11-14 year olds and Here I am (1992) for primary children. Evaluation of Weaving the Web showed that, although its format and approach were widely welcomed<sup>69</sup> by teachers and pupils, since it met the needs of a wide range of pupils' ability and faith development, it tended to be misused by inexperienced teachers as a substitute scheme of work (Coordinator's report, 18 November 1991). The Vatican's Congregation of the Clergy endorsed the use of the 'Web' in schools as part of 'a flexible framework for curriculum planning' and dioceses like Westminster recommended it, while complementing it with diocesan syllabuses and inservice-training.

However, exercising their legitimate local episcopal authority, two bishops, (Birmingham and Salford) considered the programme 'defective' as an expression of Catholic doctrine, and advocated an alternative scheme (the 'New Christian Way', published by Veritas).<sup>70</sup> A storm of protests

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<sup>69</sup>eg. one head of RE praised 'the easy continuity between the experiential and more specifically theological material' (Tablet, 22 February 1992)

<sup>70</sup>See Mgr. Daniel McHugh, Birmingham archdiocese's RE director, in Catholic Herald, 6 December 1991. Conservative criticism mounted when the 'Web' was 'highly recommended' by the secular educational press: if it 'could just as well have emanated from a religiously neutral secular body...it represents a capitulation to the canons of fashionable secular orthodoxy' (Kevin Preston, RE adviser to the archdiocese of Birmingham, Universe: 2 February 1992). The Catholic novelist Piers Paul Read even accused it of portraying Jesus as a 'Che Guevara of the ancient world'.

(especially in the Catholic Herald in the autumn of 1991) decried the lack of teaching on the Catholic faith in schools funded by the 'sacrifices of the faithful few', the confusion of 'religious tolerance with religious indifferentism', the watering down to the 'lowest common denominator' of what is distinctly Catholic, and religious sociology replacing teaching on Christ, the Church and Sacraments.<sup>71</sup> Pressure groups such as 'Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice' lobbied bishops to reexamine their endorsement in the light of the New Catechism (1993)<sup>72</sup>. Fuelled by the parallel demands of the 'back to basics' campaigners for the National Curriculum and the increasingly vociferous 'parental complaints' lobby, the conservative groundswell was considerable.<sup>73</sup> The theologian, John Redford, argued that Catholic schools are 'confessional', not 'denominational', in that they 'promote a specific belief system'; he asked the 'bishops to consider an appropriate syllabus in line with the New Catechism, since Catholic RE will... always be aiming to lead pupils to faith in Jesus Christ' (Tablet 22 February 1992).

From the evidence we have considered, it seems clear that the current concerns among teachers and theologians about traditional catechesis in Catholic schools arise from more than one cause. All other curriculum subjects are taught in a style which encourages active participation by the

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<sup>71</sup>See 'Weaving the Web of Confusion', by Fr. Francis Marsden, a Liverpool priest.

<sup>72</sup>Bishop Konstant described the Catechism as having the potential to be 'a framework, a signpost, an anchor, and a source for growth in faith' The Tablet, 11th December 1992.

<sup>73</sup>During our personal interview in June 1992, Jim Gallagher was telephoned by an irate Catholic who blamed him, Vatican II and 'Weaving the Web' for destroying the Church and causing marital breakdowns! Gallagher said the more usual complaint was that 'Web may be Christian but it's not Catholic', a view he considered unjustified.

pupils.<sup>74</sup> In part the doubts about catechesis spring from the plain fact that good Roman Catholic theology no longer makes such absolute assertions of the exclusive claims of the Roman Catholic Church to be the one ark of salvation; there is a more positive appreciation of authentic faith and love in other Christian bodies (1983 canon law 383.3), even if the spirit of wariness and conservative caution is far from exorcised. The modern concept of the Church as making an appeal to the conscience and as being more witnessing than magisterial, is one that can easily be discerned in Roman Catholic writers of recent decades<sup>75</sup>. Yet in part the hesitations also spring from the rising floodwaters of contemporary secularism<sup>76</sup>, and from a loss of general confidence that the other-worldly message of the Church speaks to the condition of twentieth-century society. Roman Catholics, as much as Anglicans, need to feel that Christianity is being taught in Church schools in a way that respects the conscience of the individual (both pupil and teacher), enhances its

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<sup>74</sup>In a personal interview (June 1992), the director of the Catholic Education Service commented: 'the parents who expect RE to be taught in the way it was 20 years ago wouldn't expect that of science!'

In 1988, Catholic teachers in Birmingham were dismayed when the new GCSE (M.E.G.) syllabus in Religious Studies (which encouraged candidates to 'make their own judgements' provided they were 'supported by reasoned argument' and 'to examine objectively the similarities and differences between the Anglican, Free and Roman Catholics') was rejected by their Archbishop as insufficiently denominational.

<sup>75</sup>Especially if influenced by French thinkers wrestling with the secularist legacy of the French Revolution: a thoughtful example may be seen in the work of Y.M.J.Congar, Priest and Layman (1967), translation of a French original of 1962, esp. chap. 21 on pluralism.

<sup>76</sup>As the Westminster diocesan director, Kathleen O'Gorman, commented, (Daily Telegraph 31 December 1991), the proper focus for conservative critics 'is the terrible, swamping pressure of a society which fastens on the functional and materialistic at the expense of the spiritual, moral and the aesthetic. These pressures are no less strong within Catholic schools'.

academic credibility and encourages young people to relate the challenge of the gospel to their own lives.

‘With the emergence of a strong ecumenical movement, the Christian Church should be sufficiently at one to permit at least our educational efforts to be named by the generic term ‘Christian religious education’, which reminds us that we are all called to a universal Christian Church. In this a basic unity is both affirmed and proposed as a vision’. Groome, T.H. (1980) Christian Religious Education, Harper and Row, p.24.

## 5. Christian ethos, values and culture

The ethos of a school is so elusive a thing that it is tempting to suggest it is discernible only by some sort of intuition or hunch. One often hears people say ‘I just feel the Christian atmosphere in the school’.<sup>77</sup> Nevertheless the intuitive approach makes the task of appraisal or evaluation difficult: it may make it too easy to shy away from awkward questions such as ‘What does the school believe it stands for?’ It may prevent a school from responding promptly or positively to the changes in the surrounding community from which the children come. If the school is to anticipate the needs of society and to respond appropriately to its expectations, it has to develop its ‘prophetic role’, asking such questions as ‘How does the school come to understand or question the values of society?’ ‘Does the school make a positive attempt to promote understanding of cultural/racial national/international dimensions?’ Through this self-critical, reflective approach, a Church school has the opportunity for self-renewal, rooted in the growth of the Christian community and responsive to the message of the Gospel. The viewpoint of this chapter is that its ultimate allegiance should not induce a policy of defensive isolation from the outside world, but rather endorse an affirmative approach to the community around it.

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<sup>77</sup>cf. the RC Bishop’s comment in Belfast, below p. 373.

That Church schools exist to uphold Christian values may safely be regarded as non-controversial. There may be debate, however, if one asks to what extent parents look upon such schools as a welcome oasis in the arid desert of secularist values, dominated by market forces or by mere hedonism. Are parents expecting Church schools to provide a haven where right and wrong are rather more than hurrah or boo, a secure defence against a colder world which has become more impersonal, secular, and 'humanist' in the sense of rejecting the role of religion as a vehicle of morality and culture? (see O'Keeffe 1986 op. cit. p.85)

Secular institutions which include a wide diversity of opinion instinctively wish to treat all opinions, especially moral and religious opinions, as equally valid (or invalid). Moral judgements quickly become matters to be relegated to the area of private decision by individuals.<sup>78</sup> By the term 'reasonable' there is usually intended the meaning that it will somehow be conducive to happiness, whether for the individual (i.e. eudaemonism) or for the greatest possible number in the community (i.e. utilitarianism).

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<sup>78</sup>Harvey Cox observed in The Secular City (SCM 1965) that 'a predominant secularisation means the privatisation of religion'; religion 'ceases to provide an inclusive and commanding system of personal and cosmic values and explanations' (p.3) While recognising this process of secularisation, the sociologist Bryan Wilson argues very differently that the completely secularised society has not yet existed. 'The secular society of the present, in which religious thinking, practices, and institutions have but a small part, is none the less the inheritor of values, dispositions and orientations from the religious past' (1966 Religion in a Secular Society, Pelican, p. 262). In short, it is not altogether simple to disentangle secular from religious values. The Secretary of State for Education, in a statement on 5th March 1993, re-emphasised the importance of Christian religious education in teaching people moral values.

Christian schools are faced with a problem of discernment here. To what extent can Christian values be assumed to be embedded in the moral values of contemporary society, and therefore implicit in the educational process? Or is it necessary for Christian schools to be more explicit in identifying and stressing Christian standards over against the values of the secular world? Christians are obviously not the only people to stand for the stability of the family or for honesty in commercial dealings, both being concerns of wide consequence for the quality of public life; but such concerns are certainly profoundly characteristic of Christian moral teaching. The anxiety expressed by parents and by government officials about declining moral standards or about the general ignorance of the Christian presuppositions underlying English culture (the kind of ignorance that makes much of Shakespeare and Milton remote and puzzling) suggests that a more explicit endorsement is needed.<sup>79</sup>

Pressure groups have been gathering momentum since the 1988 Education Reform Act to persuade the government to approve the establishment of more maintained schools for specific religious faiths and denominations. Like the Muslims, the Christian Schools' Movement has argued that central and local

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<sup>79</sup>For example, the then Secretary of State for Education and Science, Mr Kenneth Baker, commented in The Times on 1 February 1988: 'Children should be grounded in fundamental values like honesty, responsibility, self-respect and respect for others...This government no less than the Churches wants to enhance the moral dimension of education'. The public outrage in February 1993 following the arrest for murder of two primary age children stimulated the debate further. The then Chairman of the National Curriculum Council, David Pascall, endorsed the role of the school in supporting parents 'by having a clear vision of the moral values which they and society hold to be important' ('The spiritual and moral dimension', 7th May 1992); see also T.E.S. leader of 26 February 1993, 'Stumbling out of a moral vacuum'. Baroness Cox has described the failure of schools to provide young people 'with an opportunity to become familiar with some of the most precious expressions of Christian faith which are part of this country's heritage' as a 'dreadful betrayal' (Hansard, 26 February 1988, 1454-55).



government, by blocking applications for aided status, were

'failing to honour the right of parents to have their children educated in harmony with religious and philosophical convictions as enshrined in the European Convention on Human Rights' (Education, 20 June 1990).

This campaign, supported by representatives of all parties in the House of Lords, was further fuelled by the assumption that even Church schools were not sufficiently explicit in their endorsement of the values inherent in Christian faith, compromising their Christian character for the price of State financial aid.<sup>80</sup>

The senior staff of one evangelical Christian school endorsed their school's all-pervasive ethos: 'We feel very strongly about discipline..., we're not an indoctrinating centre, but we allow no deviation from the rules' (Daily Telegraph 4th March 1993). The 1993 legislation may facilitate the development of new independent Christian Schools, but some opponents warn of the dangers of divisive sectarianism, that 'parental choice.. must be balanced with the needs of society and those real consumers, the children themselves' (Baroness Flather, Hansard, 4 March 1991, col. 1265). The Swann Report Education for All (1985, Cmnd. 9453, HMSO) argued:

'It is essential ...to look ahead to educating all children, from whatever ethnic group, to an understanding of the shared values of our society as a whole as well as to an appreciation of the diversity of lifestyles and cultural, religious, and linguistic backgrounds which make up this society and the wider world' (Ch. 6 para. 14). The principle of 'diversity within unity' (Ch. 1 para. 6) should reflect 'a genuinely pluralist society, as both socially cohesive and culturally

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<sup>80</sup>See Hughes F. (1990) 'Christian Education in Recently Established Christian Schools' in Spectrum, vol. 22, no.2, Summer 1990 and O'Keeffe, B. in Watson, B. (ed.) (1992) op. cit. Chapter 6.

diverse' (Ch.1 para 5).<sup>81</sup>

More recently, anxiety has been expressed that the government is seeking to return to an assimilationist rather than a pluralist approach,<sup>82</sup> through its insistence on British ethnocentricity, for example in the National Curriculum programmes of study for history or english.<sup>83</sup>

These tensions between diversity and unity have been explored by Edward Hulmes, among others <sup>84</sup>. The danger is that endorsing religious pluralism can risk a slide into mere relativism, which in turn can lead to greater

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<sup>81</sup>In spite of a dissenting minority of six of its members, the final Report expressed 'misgivings about the implications and consequences of separate provision of any kind explicitly catering for ethnic minority group pupils', since this would undermine the principle that all pupils should 'share a common educational experience which prepares them for life in a truly pluralist society' (Ch. 8 para. 2. 11).

<sup>82</sup>The then Prime Minister's negative attitude to religions outside the Judeo-Christian Tradition (lamenting their disregard for 'the worth of the individual', T.E.S., 20 April 1990) reinforced this belief. A T.E.S. leader commented:

'The truth is that the Government, in its resistance to multicultural approaches, is simply demonstrating its suspicion of other cultures in general...The aim presumably is that as many ethnic minority school-leavers as possible should pass Norman Tebbit's cricket test' (i.e. for which side they cheer in a Test Match between e.g. England and Pakistan or the West Indies) 8th June 1990.

In January 1991 David Konstant, Roman Catholic Bishop of Leeds and Chairman of the RC Bishops' Education Committee, spoke in support of extending voluntary aided status to schools for Muslims and children of other minority faiths. In the magazine Education (December 1990) the chairman of the Church of England Board for Education, Bishop Michael Adie of Guildford, had already expressed similar views. Both bishops urged that such schools follow the National Curriculum and provide equal opportunities for girls and boys. (Report in Church Times, 11 January 1991).

<sup>83</sup>e.g. Parrinder, P. 'Nationality English', London Review of Books, 28 January 1993

<sup>84</sup>Hulmes, E. (1989) Education and Cultural Diversity, Longman; also in Watson, B. ed. (1992) op. cit. Chapter 8.  
McClelland, V.A. ed. (1988) Christian Education in a Pluralist Society, Routledge

demands for the recognition of sectional interests<sup>85</sup>.

'In default of agreement about the limits of tolerance in a pluralist society, and about the role of education in helping to preserve a measure of social cohesion and integrity, it must be asked if unity, in all but a superficial sense, is possible'. (Hulmes in Watson 1992, p.130).

Hulmes considers that a recognition of the creative value of diversity can contribute to a sense of unity. Are Anglican and Roman Catholic schools able to offer a coherent contribution to this debate? We have already noted the implications of, for example, divisive admission policies or 'ghetto-mentality' Church schools. But where the distinctive Christian ethos encourages an holistic and integrative rather than segregated approach, the school may better prepare children to cope with the pressures of a secular society<sup>86</sup>.

If its 'mission' is one of creative growth, development or enrichment in a supportive and caring atmosphere rather than of 'spoon-feeding' in an authoritarian environment; if there is a transcendent perspective which unifies the curriculum; if spiritual values influence moral judgements and illuminate scientific and technological study; if Christian belief is appreciated in its cultural context yet seen to encourage a response to the needs of the local or wider community; then the coincidence of values between

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<sup>85</sup>It is interesting to note that the demands for recognition by ethnic minorities in the former Soviet Union or Yugoslavia have preoccupied international agendas in recent years.

<sup>86</sup>McClelland argues: 'The denominational school must be a community of love, not an inward-looking protective kind of love, but an out-going exhalation of love that reaches beyond the confines of the school into the family, the Church, the pluralistic community at large' (1988, op. cit. p.24) See also Hulmes, E. (1992) 'Christian Education: an instrument of European unity?' in Astley, J. and Day, D. The Contours of Christian Education, McCrimmons, p.304f.

home, school and Church can provide a challenging springboard rather than a protective cocoon.

i). Anglicans

Within the Christian tradition the strain of diversity within unity has often reached breaking point. It is not an easy message to sell in Ulster, for example, where those who speak of unity underlying the impassioned diversity are often regarded as traitors. Even within Anglicanism with its historic legacy of holding together a Catholicism without a pope, an Erasmian liberalism, and a sharp-elbowed Protestantism,<sup>87</sup> the acceptance of diversity can be very reluctant indeed, producing organised party-groups in the General Synod, most recently over the ordination of women to the priesthood. Yet the 'broad' Church tradition characteristic of Anglicanism may have something to offer this debate.

Anglican schools that have tried to balance the twin aims of serving both Church and community are well used to the creative tensions:

'The ethos of the school will need to be developed through careful policy decisions regarding discipline in all its aspects, appointment of staff, admission of pupils, the pattern of worship and links with the wider community. But all these areas of concern need to reflect the Church's concern for the 'provision of general education in the neighbourhood' and must take into account the local community'.

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<sup>87</sup>This diversity is admirably explored in Nichols, A. (1993) The Panther and the Hind, Clark.

For Anglican schools, there are both opportunities and dangers in their close affiliation with the values of their community. The residual respect for the Church of England in British society still leaves possibilities for the Church to present a challenge to the community to take the moral demands of the Gospel seriously<sup>89</sup>. Although, as we have noted, there may be mixed motives for parental choice, Anglican schools may welcome pupils whose family commitment to the Church is negligible but who profess to be wanting a 'good Christian education' for their children.

'Many of our families do not practise a faith, but all come to value the ethos of the school and the commitment of its staff and clergy and many are drawn to the faith',

commented one headteacher in the 1991 Culham report on Anglican primary schools in the London diocese.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>88</sup>The Bishop of London, Dr Graham Leonard, pointed out to the General Synod of the Church of England in its major debate on education in July 1985, that many dioceses were expressing alarm at the mounting materialist, utilitarian, secularist influences pervading society at large and society's expectations of education in particular. He urged that 'Christians had a particular responsibility to witness to, and work for, the truth that education was to enable people to achieve their full potential individually, as members of society and in relation to God'.

<sup>89</sup>'Religion is still deeply woven into the fabric of cultural identity. The whole notion of belonging to the nation, of being English seems inseparable from a need to claim the title 'Christian'... Most members of the population do not merely feel that they belong to the Church (which they rarely visit) but that the Church belongs to them'. Bernice Martin (1981) A Sociology of contemporary cultural change, Oxford, Blackwell, (p. 193).

<sup>90</sup>However, Leslie Francis, (1987) Religion in the Primary Schools: partnership between Church and State? (Collins), alerted such schools to the results of his research, which suggested that where the Church of England operated religiously distinctive neighbourhood schools and admitted children from non - 'church related' backgrounds, 'at best these schools are having no distinctive religious impact on the pupils when compared with county schools; at worst they are having a negative impact' (p. 191).

Anglicans may find themselves actually appreciated for making explicit the principles and values on which they stand. A Future in Partnership (1984) warns those involved in Church schools:

‘If relativising forces obfuscate traditional values and the Christian roots from which many of them have sprung, the Christian contribution to the debate may well be to work for the retention within publicly funded education of options based firmly on Christian values and truth’ (p.24).

These remarks may reflect a sensitivity to the exclusive intolerance of contemporary secularism which does not regard religious faith as an available option and resents any public support through government funding for education with a religious ethos and commitment (whether Christian or Muslim or Jewish). Inter-faith dialogue is not merely about differences at a time when the great world religions share a common cause in the confrontation with radical atheism and secularism.

Nevertheless, within the Christian majority and the Muslim minority there are strident voices contending for monoculturalism, on the basis that Christians, Muslims, and Jews, believe different things and have different ways of worship, which are not amenable to a submerging of their characteristic identities. Ecumenism within the Christian tradition is inherently difficult: to transfer the methods and some of the presuppositions of the Christian ecumenical dialogue to multi-faith convergence is altogether still more difficult. One Anglican headteacher in O’Keeffe’s 1986 survey said:

‘If multicultural education means Asian/West Indian awareness, it is a non-starter. When a person emigrates, he/she should adopt the customs and attitudes of the host country. This is not an arrogant statement, it is common sense’ (p.132).

On the other hand, the Church of England’s General Synod received a

discussion paper in 1984, entitled 'Schools and Multicultural Education'. This took up the question put by the National's Society's A Future in Partnership : how can the Church, in preaching reconciliation, 'foster the processes that will reconcile alienated racial groups? Does the service to the nation need reinterpreting in a Britain that stands in some danger of racial disharmony?' These processes, it is urged, may included admitting to Church schools children of other faiths with a view not to assimilation or social integration, still less religious conversion, but to authentic dialogue which encourages not mere tolerance but openhearted acceptance.<sup>91</sup>

The difficulties experienced in defining multicultural education among secular educationists do not make it easier for Christian teachers to answer when the nature of the question is not yet clearly defined. Many may attempt to fall back on the view that they are there to teach Christianity, a response most likely in areas with few ethnic minority children; others feel the need to prepare pupils to take their place in a multicultural society. Ball and Troyna have observed:

'For teachers in voluntary schools faced with an unclear definition of multicultural education, Christianity becomes the vehicle on which the values of cultural diversity, tolerance, and harmony can apparently best be transmitted'. ('Resistance, rights, and rituals: denominational schools and multicultural education', in Journal of Education Policy vol. 2, no.1, 1987).

In the light of the 1988 Lambeth Conference where the bishops from the

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<sup>91</sup>It has been argued that a pluralistic society needs to 'provide a dynamic context in which people's beliefs are exchanged, defended, argued about, converted, retained, assessed, ignored ostentatiously and so on; all the reactions people have to the beliefs of other people whom they take seriously'. (P. Wakling in 'The Idea of a Multicultural Education', Journal of the Philosophy of Education vol. 14, no.1, 1980, p.94).

The governors of one Anglican school where the majority of the pupils are Muslim faced a particular dilemma when their Christian headteacher converted to Islam.

Third World formed so considerable a contingent, any suggestion that Anglican Christianity is monocultural would be ludicrously outdated. A school which calls itself Anglican ought to be aware of the massive diversity of racial and cultural traditions represented even within the Anglican Communion. Since much of this diversity is also reflected among Anglicans living in Britain, particularly among the West Indian communities, Church schools do not merely have a responsibility to enter into dialogue with other faiths, but also to be conscious of the different cultures within their own tradition.

A considered response along these lines is an important counter to critics who attack Church schools for not only perpetuating social inequality and economic disadvantages but for blithely taking no notice of the racism on their doorstep (e.g. S. Ball in O'Keeffe (1988) op. cit. p.48). Ann Dummett has observed that in some areas 'West Indians are more likely to be practising Christians than local white people, and here Church schools can be seen to be doing something positive to overcome racism' (Race and Church Schools, Runnymede Trust 1981, p.17)<sup>92</sup>. Dummett's research concluded with the perspicuous remark that where there was a black Christian community, Christian preference for Church schools has 'the effect of creating multiracial institutions; where the black community was not Christian, it had the effect of preventing it' (p.65). The challenging

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<sup>92</sup>One headteacher questioned in the Runnymede survey suggested that the researcher ask a child in the playground 'Do you love Jesus?' The response from the white child was likely to be 'Wot, me?' The West Indian child's answer would be quite different: 'He knows what you're talking about' (p.47). For further discussion, see O'Keeffe (1986) op. cit. p. 108-9, Troyna, B. and Carrington, B. (1990) Education, Racism and Reform, Routledge, p.102-3; Tomlinson, S. (1990) Multicultural Education in White Schools, Batsford, p.16.



problems for Anglican schools must primarily lie in the latter area. Christians can sometimes have the illusion that religion is a reconciling thing where race and class are dividing, whereas there is evidence that where the religion is different, it may be the most divisive force of all.

The government has claimed that Church schools are the kind of schools it wishes to encourage (cf. John Patten in the Church Times, 30 October 1992). Increasingly researchers indicate that Anglican schools in particular perform well academically, maintain high standards of discipline and behaviour and were perceived as caring institutions which successfully encouraged pupils in Christian values.<sup>93</sup> The London diocesan director, following the results of commissioned research, commented that there was a remarkable consensus among his Anglican schools about the importance of their Christian ethos (often regarded as the most important item on governing body agendas) : they had a distinctive contribution to make in this area to the public education system (Church Times 5 July 1991).

It can therefore be seen that Anglican schools in general have a clear commitment to be both part of their local community and to offer a distinctive Christian presence in education. The pressures of grant-maintained status and flattery of parental oversubscription may encourage more emphasis on

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<sup>93</sup>e.g. Peter Mortimore (deputy director of the London Institute of Education) considered Anglican aided primary schools 'among the most effective in the country' (Education, 29 May 1992). Leslie Francis noted that these schools might approach the secular curriculum and teaching methodology like county schools, but they were distinctive in their Christian perspectives on RE, moral education, church links and assemblies and on pastoral issues, e.g. parental and community liaison, a caring atmosphere. (1986) Partnership in Rural Education, Collins. Indeed, one teacher went further: 'to withdraw a child from RE or assembly would be pointless because the Christian ethic permeates the whole life of the school' (O'Keeffe 1986, op. cit. p.81)

the latter role at the expense of the former. The Church of England's vision for its schools may need greater clarification<sup>94</sup> if their historic links with the local area are to be maintained, as well as those with parish and diocese.

ii). Roman Catholics

'Christ is the foundation of the whole educational enterprise ... In their individual ways all members of the school community share this Christian vision, and that is what makes the school Catholic' (para. 34). 'The specific mission of the school is a critical, systematic transmission of culture in the light of faith and the bringing forth of the power of Christian values by the integration of culture with faith and of faith with living' (para. 49), The Catholic School (1977).

In broad terms there is no special difficulty in discovering the central principle which makes a school Roman Catholic. In looking for signs of a Catholic ethos, some outward manifestations might be taken for granted: a crucifix in the entrance hall would not be distinctively Roman Catholic, but would certainly be characteristic. Once, however, one passes beyond either broad generalities or a few particular forms of devotion, it quickly becomes much harder to define the distinctive ethos or atmosphere by which a school can be identified as specifically Catholic. The document quoted above recognises that the school community's vision is and will be interpreted in a variety of ways, and these ways can be in tension with one another if not directly contradictory.

The value-system underlying and underpinning all aspects of relationship within the school provides a 'hidden curriculum', and could be a more important indicator of what makes a school Catholic than a well-developed

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<sup>94</sup>As recommended by 'Schools and Church' (1991), Culham survey of Anglican Secondary Schools in the London Diocese.

catechetical programme. The variety of interpretation, however, will also reflect the current debate within the Catholic community about questions of morality and even of faith (at least in the sense of theological understanding of the tradition of doctrine). To the conservative Catholic mind, both developments in historical criticism of the Bible and in ecumenical outreach may appear threatening; there is discussion concerning the limits to which the Catholic is free to go in these and similar areas. Sexual morality also generates controversy<sup>95</sup>; the very nature of the authority of the Pope and Bishops to rule in this area can spark disputes.

Tony Higgins, Director of the Catholic Schools adaptation of the famous Humanities Project, reported back in 1979 that

‘there is no consensus among those working in Catholic education about the distinguishing characteristics of a Catholic school... Conversations with teachers... revealed a fair measure of agreement that a Catholic school should above all be a Christian community, but there was some divergence of view about the features which should characterise such a community - e.g. whether worship should be compulsory. Some saw its main characteristic as ‘good discipline’. Others thought that the Catholic school was distinguished from other schools, not by the answers it gave but by the nature of the questions it chose to ask’. (1979) Teaching about controversial issues in Catholic Schools, Centre for Applied Research in Education, Occasional Publications, 7, p.69.

These comments are not in such sharp tension as perhaps Tony Higgins implied, but his document as a whole attested the widespread sense of questioning among Catholic teachers at a time when the supreme Catholic virtue had ceased to be acquiescence to whatever ecclesiastical authority

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<sup>95</sup>As is illustrated by the Vatican ruling (1986) against Father Charles Curran's retaining his chair in the Catholic University of America.

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We have noted that Roman Catholic schools have been clear about their mission to nurture Catholics, but to assume that the effectiveness of the ethos of a school can be exclusively judged by subsequent Church affiliation would be altogether too narrow a focus. It is often urged that a Catholic school's ethos is seen by the way in which such teachers live out their Christian commitment in their everyday lives and relations with pupils.<sup>97</sup> As in Anglican schools, the qualities looked for by Catholic schools in appointing their teaching staff combine knowledge of their subjects, ability to communicate such knowledge, and a sense of Christian purpose.

‘A teacher who is full of Christian wisdom, well prepared in his own subjects, does more than convey the sense of what he is teaching to his pupils. Over and above what he says, he guides his pupils beyond his mere words to the heart of total Truth...This is what makes the differences between a school whose education is permeated by the Christian spirit and one in which religion is only regarded as an academic subject like any other’ (The Catholic School, 1977, paras. 41 and 43).

Catholic adolescents are no different from their non-Catholic contemporaries (religious and irreligious) in wanting to test what they have learnt for themselves. If the teacher is seen only as an authority figure who merely reiterates Catholic teaching each time a controversial question arises, then it is not wholly surprising that later adult appropriation of Christian values is not as profound as Roman Catholic educators would wish and hope. The

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<sup>96</sup>See Hornsby-Smith, M. (1991) Roman Catholic beliefs in England, Cambridge: ‘In practice, Pope John Paul II was seen as a “nice guy” but this had few implications in terms of obedience to his teaching. Most Catholics will in the last analysis make up their own minds on moral issues’ (p. 208-9).

<sup>97</sup>cf. (1982) Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith, C.T.S., para. 32f.

teacher has to acquire some real personal understanding of the general principles and coherence of Christian faith in the Catholic tradition, being both a guide and fellow inquirer with the questioning pupil: the pupils

‘are unlikely to be drawn into a deeper commitment in the following of Jesus Christ unless they see such a commitment reflected in the teacher’s way of life’ (1981) Signposts and Homecomings, p. 104.<sup>98</sup>

As in Anglican schools, governors appointing staff have to strike a delicate balance between the need for high quality teachers and the need for practising Christians. Most Catholic schools advertising in the press place great weight on their senior staff and R.E. teachers being unreservedly committed Roman Catholics but, as we have noted, the figures show an increase in the proportion of non-Catholic teachers being employed in Catholic maintained schools<sup>99</sup>. At what point might a Roman Catholic school begin to feel that its identity was somehow being blurred by too many teachers who could not share in everything the Catholic tradition represented? No agreed answer has yet emerged.

Another focus for the values underpinning the Catholic school is commonly seen in liturgical celebrations. With the local priest or school chaplain leading teachers and pupils together in the offering of worship, they are an

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<sup>98</sup> Donal O’Leary (1983) op. cit. chapter 3, speaking of what he calls ‘redemptive teaching’, argued that the teacher has to be prepared to learn alongside the student, so that ideas are exchanged in an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect.

<sup>99</sup> The director of the Catholic Education Service noted that, although RC primary schools had about 90% RC staff, it was only 69% in RC secondary schools (personal interview June 1992). The revised code of canon law of 1983 (canon 804,2) boldly asks for Catholic schools only to appoint teachers who are ‘outstanding in true doctrine and uprightness of life... and in their teaching ability’. Such exemplars in theology and of the spiritual life are increasingly hard to come by.

explicit manifestation of Christian faith and practice: in this respect Catholic, like Anglican, schools are marked out from their secular counterparts in the maintained sector. The 'message' the children receive will depend on a number of factors. Is the priest an effective communicator with young people? Are pupils subjected to regimentation in their attendance at Mass? Are staff and pupils alike active participants (a participation which may be made more difficult for girls if and when the ruling of the Roman curia against their assistance round the altar is observed and enforced)<sup>100</sup>? Is the service seen as a matter of priority in the day's events? The answers to such questions as these will indicate whether school worship is hardly more than a formalised ritual exercise, a training in correct responses, or a power-house of authentic religious experience.

In recent years, both Catholic and many Anglican schools and parishes have placed a special and singular emphasis on participation in eucharistic worship; this can bring difficulty in that it may involve a level of maturity and understanding not necessarily required in other forms of liturgical worship<sup>101</sup>. To Catholics and Anglicans alike, a celebration of the eucharist requires a priest. However, it may also be important in a school to have services of worship to which an ordained priest is not indispensable, thereby allowing greater flexibility and an involvement by young people in which

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<sup>100</sup>Though hard information is difficult to obtain, the ruling seems to be more observed in the UK than in France or Germany: Roman Catholic parents at Redhill pressed Cardinal Hume critically on this ruling during his visit to St. Bede's in March 1992.

<sup>101</sup>When Catholic schools admit children from Christian but non-Catholic families, then flexibility of form and an inclusive participation by pupils become of special importance. (see above p. 131)

their role is not secondary.

In 1985, the then national RE adviser to the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, Patrick Purnell, expressed his reservations about compulsion for school eucharists:

'I find it extremely difficult to think of the eucharist ever being an appropriate act of compulsory worship, either for the school as a whole or for a class... How can you impose worship on everybody? Worship is an act of devotion freely made by believers as a sign of their love and commitment' (1985 Our Faith Story, Collins, p.132).

Many Church schools (like St. Bede's Redhill) offer their pupils religious services before class or during lunch hours. Such arrangements can testify to the importance of the school's Christian witness without the pressure of a compulsory requirement, and may correct the impression often retained by pupils that a free response is less significant than an act of duty. Support given to voluntary activities<sup>102</sup> (e.g. discussion groups or retreat days) by staff and pupils can also help to assess the degree to which the Christian ethos of the school is 'permeated with the gospel spirit of freedom and love' (The Catholic School, para. 55).

Roman Catholic educationists have also argued that Christian values across the curriculum need more explicit focus. For example, science should encourage critical objectivity and intellectual challenge, not losing sight of a sense of wonder and contemplation at God's creation. In history, the period of the Tudors and Stuarts would be a useful study for Church schools, to enable pupils to have some understanding of the causes of the divisions of western

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<sup>102</sup>which provide valuable opportunities for initiating or developing faith-experiences, cf. Gallagher, J. (1988) op. cit. p.42-3.

Christendom<sup>103</sup>. Patrick Walsh considers it the responsibility of Christian schools to take a far stronger lead in developing courses on peace studies, the Third World, conservation, racial and sexual equality, 'because these are areas in which learning relates directly to matters of justice and love' (1983, op. cit. p.10).<sup>104</sup>

Roman Catholic schools situated in deprived inner city parishes may be able to demonstrate commitment to social justice by their very existence. In Britain, they have traditionally reflected considerable cultural diversity because of the substantial number of Irish, Italian, Polish, and Hispanic families. Nationally the proportion of black families with a Roman Catholic allegiance is relatively small, and black pupils are often poorly represented in the schools. A 'divisive anomaly' can be created if Asian and Afro-Caribbean pupils predominate in secular schools, while Church schools remain almost exclusively white and ethnically European (cf. Catholic

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<sup>103</sup>One of the more important sources of continuing mutual deafness between Roman Catholics and Anglicans is the relative absence of a reconciliation of memories in the way the history of the sixteenth century is understood (cf. ARCIC papers on 'Justification').

<sup>104</sup>Walsh has remarked on the argument that if black music and culture are advocated for black pupils, then Christian music, art and literature might be part of the curriculum for Christian pupils (in O'Leary, 1983, op. cit. p.6f.). This is evidently no proposal to confine the study of literature in school to Christian writing, since any such limiting proposal would conspicuously fail to prepare pupils for the adult world.

'Cut out from your class books all broad manifestations of the natural man, and those manifestations are waiting for your pupil's benefit at the very doors...' (J.H. Newman, The Idea of a University IX 8, ed. Ker, p.197)

The Vatican acknowledged that 'since it is motivated by the Christian ideal, the Catholic school is particularly sensitive to the call from every part of the world for a more just society... It does not stop at the courageous teaching of the demands for justice even in the face of local opposition, but tries to put these demands into practice in its own community in the daily life of the school' 1977, op. cit. para. 58). Such statements build on the texts of the second Vatican Council, especially 'Gaudium et Spes' para. 29, and of the 1971 Synod of Bishops 'Justice in the World'.



Commission for Racial Justice (1984) Learning from Diversity). At Vatican II Gaudium et Spes observed that 'forms of social or cultural discrimination in basic social rights' are 'incompatible with God's design' (para. 29; tr. Flannery, 1981, p.929). Roman Catholics are not of course the only Christians who sense a mismatch between modern society's egalitarian values and their own, but the problem of equal opportunities seems specially acute for them in gender issues where female role-models have tended to be 'subservient'.<sup>105</sup>

Cardinal Basil Hume stated his view on the ethos and values of a Catholic school thus:

'If it is based on a true awareness of God, there should be an almost tangible atmosphere of freedom, welcome and warmth. Care, concern and respect for people as children of God should be demonstrated in the attitudes of staff to pupils and of pupils to each other. Individuals will be valued for themselves irrespective of ability and achievement. A noticeable sense of unity and family will affect the way that discipline is exercised without brutality or indifference... young people will devote themselves generously and selflessly to those who suffer from any kind of distress;... the old and the handicapped in the area, the destitute in the Third World. There should be beauty, orderliness and an absence of vandalism. Religious symbols should be well-chosen and their influence pervasive... The quality of relationships... is decisive both for learning... and for growing in faith and commitment'. (1988, op.cit. p.111-2.)

The Church's mission and sense of witness to the world should also be

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<sup>105</sup>'It seems to me that Catholics with their special devotion to Our Lady, their celibate religious, and their interpretation of the biblical predominance of man in prescriptive rather than culture-bound terms, are particularly prone to the ideology of the permanent maternal vocation' (Hornsby-Smith, 1979, op. cit. p.40).

reflected in the school community.<sup>106</sup> The Catholic school can now open its doors to non-Catholic pupils and staff (even if initially for pragmatic reasons, though this may also be seen as an opportunity); it can invite in visiting speakers with controversial opinions and can reach out to cooperate with the local community. This possibility, not everywhere perhaps, envisages a different model from the Catholic Church as a closed institution intent on preserving the flock from materialism, atheism, and the 'apostasy' of Protestantism. The new model is prepared to challenge the world to take Christian values seriously, to liberate society from ignorance and prejudice through the power and light of the Holy Spirit, to point the finger at injustice and hypocrisy and to seek to take action to further the Kingdom of God. Such a challenge is addressed not only to the world; it also has to be faced within the Church and its schools.

## 6. Conclusion

Our survey has attempted to throw into sharp relief some of the problems confronting Christian schools in a Britain profoundly pluralist in faith and often detached from Christian tradition in morals. The Christian school exists to prepare its pupils for life in the contemporary world and is under pressure to achieve examination success and train young people for employment (or indeed unemployment); it also exists to retain and develop its distinctiveness as an institution of the people of God, seeking to live out

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<sup>106</sup>The openness of the Roman Catholic Church to the concerns of the world was programmatically affirmed in *Gaudium et Spes*, the concluding constitution of the second Vatican Council, 7 December 1965. This discussed the duty of the laity 'to animate the world with the spirit of Christianity' (43); the importance of keeping abreast of science and technology so as to evaluate and interpret 'with an authentically Christian sense of values' (962); the need for Christians to contribute to the movements for world peace and economic justice (66 and 73).

Christian faith and ethics. The double commitment, complemented by a profound sense of universal mission, is shared by both Roman Catholic and Anglican schools seeking to break down barriers and establish creative dialogue with Christian partners, and the question presses whether or not the time may soon come when those in authority can propose and foster a common educational policy of cooperation rather than rivalry.

The current revival of conservative Evangelicalism in the Church of England is far from being the only factor impelling Anglicans to think more of their Church schools as agencies of mission. There is a sense of reaction against surrender to scepticism and liberalising relativism, which finds expression in the expectation that pupils attending Church schools will at least emerge at the end having a clear idea of the Christian faith. Nevertheless, a Christian school must be ineffective as a missionary agency (in the appropriately broad sense) unless the education provided is of high quality. And such an education is incompatible with a narrow and blinkered presentation of the relationship between faith and culture.

The Church of England approaches the task of mission through Church schools with a certain ambivalence. Those who desire simplistic answers to fundamental questions are likely to find themselves irritated and dissatisfied by the Anglicans' desire to 'have their cake and eat it'. Yet the responsibility for providing an education directed towards the community at large which

is informed by a Christian ethos is a service to both nation and Church.<sup>107</sup> If the education has ceased to be at any point visibly Christian, then the school's title as a Church school becomes questionable. If the school is primarily an evangelistic agency to which education of high quality is a secondary consideration, it must be reckoned a failure both as mission and as education.

The Roman Catholic Church faces difficulties closely analogous to those experienced in the Church of England; but because the Roman Catholic Church in England has no deep tradition of providing education for the community at large, but seeks rather to serve its own members in the first instance (usually making places for adherents of other Christian communions, or of other faiths, more to make up numbers than to foster ecumenical understanding), these problems may be less acutely felt, at least as yet. The Director of the Catholic Education Service commented that current education debates have 'forced the whole Catholic community to analyse just what is special about our schools and what we want them to be' (Tablet 13 February 1993). In this process, conscious that the grant-maintained option might lead to fragmentation or isolation, Catholic schools are being encouraged to see their mission in the context of the wider community.

It cannot be said, as we shall see in subsequent chapters, that joint Catholic/Anglican schools are something Roman Catholic authority necessarily wishes to encourage; rather they are to be tolerated 'faute de mieux', when the alternative is no Catholic education at all in a particular

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<sup>107</sup>The task is obviously made more difficult if the pupils in the school include almost none from Christian families: the local situation must have a decisive influence upon the task of education and mission.

place.<sup>108</sup> Both traditions share the importance of Christian values over against those of secular humanism. But to carry this sharing into institutional reality with positive encouragement from authority requires a deepening of mutual trust and understanding, with agreement in principle on how the Christian ethos of the schools is to be expressed, how 'the vision of Christ' is to work out in practice.

To say that the successful establishment of joint Catholic/Anglican schools has depended, among other things, on the (still controverted) acceptance by Roman Catholic authority of the view that a catechesis which is at once narrowly faith-oriented and closed to alternatives should not be the prime or distinctive element in the ethos of a Catholic education, may be interpreted by the conservative to mean that the openness to the world fostered by Vatican II involves some dilution of Catholic distinctiveness. It is a commonplace today that the degree of success that the Roman Catholic or Anglican Church can have in ecumenical dialogue is directly related to the degree to which it can contain diversity within its own unity. Today that Roman Catholic diversity is overtly much greater than was the case before Vatican II, with no serious

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<sup>108</sup>In spite of the 1981 Report to the Roman Catholic Bishops of England and Wales, Signposts and Homecomings, (pp.150,154) recommending that an ecumenical Christian College be established for training Christian teachers and shared schools should be developed. One diocese, whose joint school failed to compete for sufficient Catholic pupils with neighbouring single RC schools, announced in February 1993 that it was to withdraw, leaving the school to its Anglican foundation.

likelihood of turning the clock back.<sup>109</sup> There are also many Anglicans (particularly High-Church and Evangelical) whose instinctive understanding of Christian faith and practice is altogether more conservative than that advocated by many progressive Roman Catholics: the Church of England in particular is not finding it easy to hold together its own historic 'fault-lines' following the vote on women's priesthood in November 1992 (Tablet 12th March 1993).

There is probably a broad consensus among Roman Catholic and Anglican educationists that it is of the life of a Church school to be and to be seen to be Christian in its ethos and values. Science and technology have created a society 'characterised by depersonalisation and a mass production mentality' (The Catholic School, 31.), and Christian schools need above all to retain the focus on the human being as an individual loved by God. Secularisation and depersonalisation are closely related. Roman Catholics and Anglicans agree on the proposition that in a depersonalising world the Christian school has something crucially important to say to both Christians and non-Christians. To become 'the Christian leaven in the world', it is essential to point to 'the liberating power of grace' (ibid. 84), rather than to react defensively against either the contemporary modern world or the possibility of alliance

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<sup>109</sup>Drawing on the work of Hammond, P.E. (1988) 'Religion and the Persistence of Identity', in Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, vol.27, no.1, who distinguished between the 'collective-expressive' and the 'individual-expressive' views of the Church, Hornsby-Smith (1991) argued that the former view had previously characterised the 'Catholic community with its strong and all embracing institutional life, hierarchical structure, clerical leadership and mechanical solidarity in the era of the fortress Church'; the latter view however 'appears to prevail in contemporary society, where "English Catholics are like everyone else" and where continuing commitment is much more likely to be voluntarily chosen but changeable' (op. cit. p.19f). He also noted the more traditional nature of the Church in Ireland (p.62), which is evident from the Lagan College case study.

with separated but 'sister Churches'.

We have seen in the discussion of the nature of a Christian school that Anglicans and Roman Catholics have much in common over against the predominant culture of liberal secular humanism in British society. Both share a sense of Christian mission which has the potential to transcend denominational boundaries. Yet for historical, theological and cultural reasons, they have tended to emphasise their differences: Anglicans held to their Establishment position as providing schools for the nation, thereby seeing themselves as primarily reflecting their own community and neighbourhood; Roman Catholics as a minority wished to remain separate in order to safeguard their own interests and maintain their wider universal perspective within the Church of Rome. Each group has much to learn from the other.<sup>110</sup>

The increasingly secular nature of British society, the 'free-market' nature of government policy and the greater emphasis on parental choice in education in the last few years have encouraged Anglican schools to become more explicit about their distinctively Christian identity. At the same time, Roman Catholics have begun to face up to the greater openness towards society

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<sup>110</sup>Bishop Alan Clark, the RC Co-chairman of ARCIC 1, (speaking at a press conference responding to disaffected Anglo-Catholic Anglicans after the vote on women priests) commended 'the riches of the Anglican spiritual heritage' expressed in 'its sense of the numinous, its sense of the liturgy, its care for all in the community. This sense of belonging to the country, to the region, to the village, is something very rich' (*Tablet* 1st May 1993). Equally the Roman Catholics' greater sense of global responsibility, enhanced by liberation theology and the justice and peace movements, has much to teach a Church of England less conscious of its contribution to a world-wide Anglican communion (except perhaps through its support of missionary societies and charities, during Lambeth Conferences or when the courageous Archbishop Tutu appears on television).

required by Vatican II, moving away from a too narrow catechetical model to embrace greater personal autonomy and freedom of conscience supported by the ethos of an explicitly Christian community. By identifying common aims in Christian education and elucidating distinctively denominational approaches, Christian schools, particularly those established as joint foundations, have allowed Anglicans and Roman Catholics to work together in educating young people in shared Christian values through formal ecumenical partnerships in schools. Their aim has been not a common uniformity, but 'diversity in unity', a mutual enrichment that draws on the gifts of each denominational tradition outlined in this chapter. The next two chapters consider in detail how far this Christian unity has developed in practice over more than a decade in two different joint Anglican and Roman Catholic secondary schools.



## CHAPTER V

### ST. BEDE'S JOINT ANGLICAN ROMAN/CATHOLIC SCHOOL, REDHILL

“There can be no ecumenism worthy of the name without a change of heart. For it is from newness of attitudes, from self-denial and unstinted love, that yearnings for unity take their rise and grow toward maturity. We should therefore pray to the divine Spirit for the grace to be genuinely self-denying, humble in the service of others, and to have an attitude of brotherly generosity towards them”.  
(Second Vatican Council, Decree on Ecumenism para. 7)

#### CHRONOLOGY OF MAIN EVENTS

|           |   |
|-----------|---|
| 1974      | Governors' formal proposal to establish a united CE/RC school           |
| 1975      | Secretary of State gave approval<br>Madge Hunt appointed as headteacher |
| 1976      | St. Bede's School opened for pupils 12-18                               |
| 1978      | Phil Dineen appointed as headteacher                                    |
| [1979-82] | Researcher was head of religious education]                             |
| 1982-85   | 'Parallel eucharists' developed   |
| 1985      | Julian Marcus appointed as headteacher                                  |
| 1988      | Visit of Dr. Runcie, Archbishop of Canterbury                           |
| 1990      | Anglican and Roman Catholic bishops dedicated new building              |
| 1992      | Governors considered proposal for Free Church involvement in Foundation |
|           | Visit of Cardinal Hume, Archbishop of Westminster                       |

## PREFACE

The first part of this chapter is based on the experience of the researcher as Head of Religious Education at St. Bede's, Redhill, during the period from April 1979 to August 1982. It builds on my dissertation study for the M.A. degree in 1983 (see above, chapter 1). Over the past decade I have continued my interest in the development of the school through numerous friends and colleagues. Returning to the school in 1992, I had expected only to review and update developments. However, my visits fortuitously coincided with the school's fundamental reappraisal of its ecumenical foundation, which provided a fresh and exciting impetus to the second stage of my case-study research.

As with previous chapters, this study draws on data from a wide range of sources, but primarily from extensive interviews with school staff, governors, parents, and pupils. Staff included all senior management personnel (head, deputy heads, and senior teachers); all members of the RE department; teachers with curricular, pastoral, or community responsibilities; and the Roman Catholic and Anglican chaplains. Governors included the chairman, parents, and LEA officers, local deanery and diocesan clergy. Parents and pupils included both past and present representatives. Interview data were complemented by the school's own publications, e.g. prospectuses, staff development plan, induction leaflets, option and Sixth Form booklets, chaplains' and governors' reports; the original papers from the school's formation, e.g. minutes, letters, statements; and the 1992 HMI inspection report.

Beyond the school, interviews took place with a variety of diocesan officers and local clergy; with headteachers and staff from other joint schools in England; with bishops and theologians directly involved in ecumenical dialogue and its theological underpinning; with representatives of the Association of Inter-Church Families and the National Association of Ecumenical Schools.

This chapter is structured in two main sections; first, the years 1972-82, during which the school was established and a programme for ecumenical religious education developed; secondly, ten years on, the academic year 1991-92, in which the main policy issue concerned the question of extending the range of the ecumenical foundation. In both sections, the principal foci of investigation are : the foundation and development of the school's ecumenical rationale, religious education, chaplaincy and ethos (including some reference to the wider curriculum). The chapter concludes with a summary pointing to the main issues for the future.

## 1. Creating a Joint School 1972-82

### a) Planning and Consultation

#### i) Legal and Educational considerations

'It was just like getting married': so quite independently in interviews in 1981, declared two members of the staff of the school, one Roman Catholic, the other Anglican, looking back on the amalgamation. But, like marriage, it was not without its strains.

The uniting of two Church schools of different denominations must in any circumstances be a process requiring sensitivity, with apprehensions and fears to be allayed. It is like two families, whose traditions are very different in some respects, coming together with their offspring to the matrimonial bond at the altar, nervous of the momentous decision about to be made, recognising the risks involved in life together, yet prepared to face the difficulties with hopeful enthusiasm; aware that the marriage might well founder on the rocks of mutual incompatibility, yet prepared to make every effort to achieve success. In the case of two schools belonging to different Churches, the tensions are potentially much greater. Both parties to the union bring with them long memories of a past of which they may be only partly conscious. And that past contains incidents of group rivalry and tension. In the case of Anglicans and Roman Catholics, we have already seen how much readily combustible material lies to hand in the memories of each group, how many gut reactions of mutual reserve and distrust, even if on both sides the Christians concerned will instinctively want to reach out a hand of fellowship and will find separation a source of deep pain.

The late sixties were years of optimism and expansion. Money was readily

available, and the comprehensive policy for education was increasingly credible and convincing. Surrey County Council, with its predominantly Tory and middle class catchment area, was reluctant to accelerate the reform of its educational system. But gradually it became apparent that change was inevitable. A three-tier system of first, middle, and comprehensive schools feeding into Sixth-Form colleges was decided upon. But by the time Surrey LEA attempted to implement this policy in its south-east division, the mid-seventies were approaching, and the money supply was coming under greater pressure. It could be argued that had they implemented decisions more speedily, some of the subsequent problems might well have been less acute.

The two denominational schools in the Redhill-Reigate area had developed very differently. The Roman Catholic school had begun as a fee-paying independent girls school in the diocese of Arundel and Brighton: in response to DES Circular 10/65, it changed its status in 1969 to become a Roman Catholic 'aided' coeducational school. This increased the number of school places available for less affluent Catholic families. However, the original LEA policy (as originally drawn up) had designated the school building as a 9 - 13 middle school, promising to make available a redundant county school for a Roman Catholic 12 -18 secondary school. By the early 1970s, as the LEA's commitment to 12 - 16 secondary schools leading to Sixth Form Colleges developed, this promise appeared to have little or no chance of fulfilment.

Meanwhile the Anglican girls secondary modern school had committed itself to Sixth Form provision back in 1968 and was now determined to retain its curriculum beyond 16 despite the LEA's stated policy. This led to preliminary discussions with the Roman Catholic school about cooperation at

Sixth Form level. As one Roman Catholic priest later wrote in the Roman Catholic Deanery Newsletter for November 1973:

‘The idea that all children who wished to continue their formal education beyond the age of 16 would have no choice but to attend a County Sixth Form College seems to the (RC) Governors to be unacceptable; while the role of the Church Schools would in this situation be reduced to comparative insignificance’.

County policy and increasing concern brought together the governing bodies of the two Church schools on 16 March 1972. They met to study the County plan, to suggest a possible alternative, and to decide on future policy if the scheme for a Sixth Form College were adopted. As a result of this meeting, a Working Party was appointed to consider a paper prepared by the two headteachers, out of which there emerged two possible courses of action:

- A. the building of a Sixth Form Centre to be run as a joint enterprise (thereby extending the cooperation at Sixth Form level begun in September 1970 to retain minority ‘A’ level subjects in the curriculum)
- B. the gradual merging of the two schools in a coeducational comprehensive school.

The second of these proposals, though more adventurous, came to seem more attractive:

‘It was decided that Plan B merited serious consideration, and both sides decided to call a special Governors’ meeting to seek views on the possibility of a United School, and also to submit these views to the Diocesan Authorities. After careful consideration, the Diocesan Authorities gave their approval to the idea, and at a joint meeting of Governors on 7 November 1972, the two headteachers submitted a series of points later entitled the ‘Manifesto’, which they felt would be helpful to the Governors in their thinking together on the future of the two schools’. (unsigned paper on the history of St. Joseph’s secondary school.)

There is no official record of consultation with staff at this stage but the researcher’s interviews indicated that informal discussions were taking place.

The headteachers' Manifesto offered significant insight into both the theological and educational bases for ecumenical cooperation and marked out the areas where values were shared, responsibilities recognised and problems foreseen: it is therefore quoted in full.

### The Manifesto

1. The condition of society at present calls for a clear and convincing witness of Christian solidarity in face of the challenge from humanists, the general indifference towards moral issues, and the apathy of nominal Christians who are uncommitted to the Christian way of life.
2. Divisions among Christians are a scandal to the young people of today. Their reasoning is that if we are sincerely following Christ, minor differences become petty and irrelevant.
3. Not only is specifically Christian teaching in the form of school assemblies and religious education under fire but the Christian values of honesty and truth are also very much at risk. We believe they can only be taught in a convincing way in the Christian context. The children in our schools are just like all other children and we are dealing with young people who are at the mercy of the pressures from a sick society and the influence of the mass media. The difference in our schools is not in the fact that they are not tempted like others, and do not fail like others, but often lies in the action taken in consequence.
4. The all-round educational value of the larger school is probably already apparent, but perhaps it should be mentioned particularly because of the need to attract staff of the highest calibre.
5. To cater for all the needs of pupils, particularly at the top of the school, makes necessary a wide spread of options from the fourth year upwards. The advantages of the larger school can clearly be seen.
6. Between the ages of 14 and 16 young people go through a period of revolt against every established standard and authority. With the understanding and tactful handling of a community of faith, they come frequently in the Sixth Form to see the values of what they have been tempted to reject. They are, at this stage, prepared to accept a more mature approach and a more personal commitment to the content of the whole Christian message.
7. If our convictions are sufficiently strong, in the light of the ultimate

vision of a united Christian school serving the local community, they will carry us through all the difficulties and frustrations of the initial stages which are inevitable in any worthwhile and far reaching project.

8. One of the encouraging aspects of this whole idea is that the project of a united Christian school is unique in the whole of the country. It could well blaze a trail for further collaboration in other areas<sup>1</sup>.

The document was formally signed by Sr Mary Jerome, head of St. Joseph's RC school and Miss Madge Hunt, head of Bishop Simpson CE School. Madge Hunt later recalled, 'A united school was a revolutionary idea at that time' (personal interview November 1992).

The 'Manifesto' may be seen to focus on three main issues:

- a) the increasing attraction of a larger school in its ability to offer a more interesting and viable curriculum for staff and pupils,
- b) the importance of a Christian school that could witness to Christian values and provide a Christian environment in which students might progress towards maturity, and finally
- c) the vision of a united Christian school as an example to the local community, the nation, and even the universal Church.

How far these ideals have been realised in practice it will be one purpose of this study to evaluate. During the summer of 1972, preliminary discussions began with Roman Catholic parents in the catchment area, and although support was far from unreserved, the governors felt confident enough by November 1972 to issue to parents a statement of their intentions, announcing the establishment of a Working Party to study the implications of forming a combined Aided Church School for boys and girls aged 12-18.

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<sup>1</sup> Cuthbert Mayne School in Torbay was yet to open as an ecumenical school in 1973.



The year of 1973 was spent in further meetings which concentrated on particular practical problems that would need to be resolved. The question of the size of the school occupied much of the discussion at the **joint meeting of governors in February**. The suggested ratio of 2 : 3 (Catholics : Anglicans) reflecting the Roman Catholic population in the catchment area suggested a 10-form entry school, in order to accommodate the numbers of Anglican girls and allow a reasonable balance of boys in the new intake. However the existing buildings could house at most a 9-form entry school; a 10-form entry school could be made possible only if the LEA and the dioceses agreed to finance additional accommodation. As it later turned out, the ratio of 2 : 3 in an 8-form entry school proved acceptable to all sides.

Another considerable issue raised at this February meeting was the effect of the denominational imbalance in staff and pupil numbers. The Roman Catholic head explicitly voiced the fear felt among her staff: 'of being completely submerged — and the things they valued could very well be lost, or it would be such a struggle to maintain them that the material advantages would be of little or no consequence.' It was a natural enough fear on the Roman Catholic side that the school might be less decisively committed to a critical stance vis-a-vis the values of surrounding English society (e.g. on questions such as authority and conscience, birth control or abortion) than the more obviously uncompromising position publicly occupied by the official hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church. The uncommitted Roman Catholic children might find, it was feared that the ethos and assumptions of a predominantly Anglican establishment would draw them into a still less distinctively Roman Catholic attitude towards moral issues or sacramental practice. On the other hand, there were some among the Roman Catholics who suggested that the resulting

situation might actually increase the sense of commitment.

The Catholic head grasped a particularly awkward nettle by pointing out that the committee had still to face up to points of division which remained inescapable and insoluble, such as participation in Mass (difficult enough to 'put over' to the children even within an exclusively Roman Catholic school), and questions such as the time that might properly be taken out of lessons for liturgical celebrations.

At this meeting considerable discussion also took place on the question of fund-raising. The Roman Catholics were accustomed to raising large sums through tombolas and raffles, and it would never cross their mind that these activities could raise ethical questions for sensitive Anglican consciences. It would seem self-evident that, while excessive gambling is socially most undesirable, a modest 'flutter' is an innocent amusement which can be turned to beneficial purposes to serve a good cause. But to Anglicans, especially if nurtured in a tradition formed by puritan or evangelical influences, a modest 'flutter' may often seem like the thin end of a wedge, the thick end of which is a life ruined by addiction to gambling. The Anglican representatives at the meeting felt it their duty to formulate the reserves likely to be held by some of their churches<sup>2</sup> at this point: 'Whilst the Anglicans would not object to receiving money raised in any way acceptable to the Catholics towards the new school, once the school was founded then they would not agree to money being raised by the joint school by means of gambling' (minutes of February 1973). The puritan or evangelical Anglicans evidently did not feel confident

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<sup>2</sup>The nearest Anglican church to the school had been 'planted' as a strong evangelical community earlier this century and preserved its thriving tradition.

that a clear distinction between a modest 'flutter' and excessive or compulsive gambling could be incisively and securely drawn, and feared that, on their side, Anglican children might be corrupted by an altogether too complacent compromise with contemporary values, unless from the start they clearly asked for a rigorist position to be maintained in practice. The proposed union of the schools would therefore bring together two contrasting moral traditions, one of which felt a centuries-old reserve towards 'amusements': what might be harmless enough for one person could (on the evidence of social facts) put another on the first step towards catastrophic corrosion of the character. Between the two moral traditions (present even within Anglicanism) there lies the divergence rooted in the Protestant tendency to individualism and the solitude of the soul in its moral struggle in this world, contrasted with the Catholic sense of the sacramental community protecting the individual from uncontrollable excess. Evidently the joint P.T.A. would have to take into account the delicate sensitivities arising from this difference of moral tradition.<sup>3</sup>

Perhaps the most critical issue discussed at the governors' meeting in February was religious education and the desirability of an agreed syllabus. Should doctrinal teaching be sifted out from the academic study of the subject? Could Roman Catholics teach a 'shared' syllabus which might be so wide and comprehensive that the task of teaching it would impose excessive strain on the staff? The labour and technical difficulties of producing an agreed syllabus might become a source of 'constant staff irritation'. On

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<sup>3</sup>A senior member of staff appointed about this time recalled that even her interview (with both headteachers together) principally focused on whether as an Anglican she could condone raffles. The teacher commented that 'it was interesting to find that our Christian ideals were common but our culture different'.

doctrinal aims there appeared to be a mounting awareness of convergence and, at a level behind that of formulas, even agreement. But awareness of areas of disagreement (or at least hitherto unresolved matters of dogmatic significance) might be felt to necessitate a division for all religious education in the new school. Most governors on both sides regarded this situation as highly undesirable and one to be averted if possible. It was therefore concluded that the two schools should exchange copies of their RE syllabuses to ascertain the extent of common ground; that no child in the joint school would receive confessional teaching of the Church to which he/she did not belong; and that while morning assemblies would be held together, the Eucharist would be celebrated separately. It was agreed that united services to mark the principal Christian festivals would be encouraged.<sup>4</sup> The meeting laid down that for denominational teaching, 'the RE on the Catholic side would always be in the hands of committed Catholics, and similarly on the Anglican side' (minutes of February 1973).

It will be seen that the discussion at this meeting focused on a series of deep issues, which have continued to be reviewed since 1973. They have also arisen in other ecumenical schools like Lagan College. The 'founders' of St. Bede's, we note, believed that for the maintaining of mutual confidence, possible sources of mutual abrasion needed to be vigilantly watched and not allowed to generate distrust and fear.

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<sup>4</sup>The record here includes the at first sight surprising and bizarre qualification 'but prayers would be to the Holy Trinity'. It seems more probable that this proviso was designed to safeguard the position of those Anglicans for whom the scriptural texts of the 'Hail Mary' would be perfectly acceptable as an acclamation but not as a prayer, rather than to reassure Roman Catholics that some possibly undogmatic Anglicans would begin to instil a liberalism indistinguishable from Unitarianism.

The joint meeting of Governors in October 1973 reported that discussions between staff and parents had not proved discouraging, in spite of the recognition that a joint school meant no provision for a separate senior Catholic school in the area. As the reaction to the proposals from the LEA's Education Committee was expected within a few weeks, it was agreed that Section 13 notices should be published simultaneously with those of the County Council. The desire to push ahead with the project was given impetus by the evidence of a willingness by the Anglican and Roman Catholic communities to find a way of growing closer together. The Anglican head commented at the meeting of October 1973 that the proposal appeared to be the right one in the light of the future mission of the Church. A senior Roman Catholic present agreed with her, saying that 'the starting-point had been an educational problem, but now the implications for the Church's mission were apparent'.

The spirit of rapprochement is equally apparent in this quotation from an article from the Deanery Newsletter for November 1973 in which the Secretary to the Roman Catholic Diocesan Schools Commission wrote as follows:

'It is the belief of the governors that the time is ripe for an experiment of this kind; that its potential for promoting Christian unity - an aim urged upon us all by Vatican II and by our present Holy Father - is incalculable, and that without it the prospects for Catholic - and indeed Christian education - in the area are far from bright.

Whether or not this experiment can be put into effect depends upon two factors: first, it must have local support - from clergy and people, as well as from the LEA; secondly it must be approved by the Department of Education and Science, as fitting in with the general scheme of reorganisation in the area which meets the requirements of the Minister. Of these two factors the overriding one is the former, and it is to be hoped that in all parishes in the deanery

there will be full and open-minded discussion of the issues at stake, with all eyes on the future rather than the past'.

By 1974 the two diocesan authorities had endorsed the governors' proposal that the ecumenical co-educational school should cater for the 12-18 age group, and that the amalgamation would come about by closing the two existing schools and establishing the new school on the old premises, and the governors were anxious to move on to the next stage. However, the LEA's concern about the joint Church school retaining its Sixth Form and the extensive consultation procedures required by the reorganisation policies of the area as a whole, meant that Section 13 notices were delayed until July. At a public meeting during this consultation period, the amalgamation was understandably attacked by individuals concerned that other local 11-16 County schools would seem less attractive and be placed in unfair competition with a new Church school that retained its Sixth Form. The Assistant Education Officer was present to make this reply:

'This Education Authority would not wish to favour denominational schools over the County schools, but these schools do have a vital part to play in the education system. This would be the only area (in the county) where the denominational schools would have combined, but it would not be the only area where a Church of England school ran alongside a Sixth Form College' (County Post, 3 March 1974).

At a meeting in April 1974, the LEA's Reorganisation Sub-Committee requested that the governors of the two Church schools reconsider their proposal for a 12-18 age-group school in the light of local objections and County policy. Other considerations that seemed to argue the case for extreme caution included the falling birth-rate and the great expense of even a restricted range of Sixth Form provision, as well as the prospect of maintaining effective management control of a three-site school with no

foreseeable likelihood of it becoming a single-site institution in the future. The governors, however, were by this time fired by their exciting vision of what might be achieved. On 9 May 1974 they formally stated their resolve to adhere to their intention to seek to establish a mixed Joint Church 12-18 school<sup>5</sup>. When the governors were called to County Hall on 10 June, 'admiration was expressed for the vision and courage behind this plan' by the LEA representatives (private letter, 22 November 1974). The Planning Officer proposed that the Catholic Middle (9-13) School (which became St. Edward the Confessor Middle School) should be created on the main site of the original St. Joseph's School, while the annexe nearby should become one of three sites for the joint Secondary School. The original Bishop Simpson School building would function as the main site of the joint school. The governors were delighted by the proposal and agreed to it, thereby preparing the way for the issue of the Section 13 notices on 26 July 1974:

'Notice is hereby given in accordance with the provisions of Section 13 (3) of the Education Act 1944 ... to establish a new Comprehensive United 8 Form Entry Voluntary Aided Mixed Secondary School to be maintained by the above Local Education Authority for about 1140 children, mainly of the ages 12 -18 years to be admitted without reference to ability or aptitude, in the premises of the Church of England special agreement Secondary School for Girls and the Roman Catholic Mixed Voluntary Aided Secondary School Annexe. It is intended to bring the School together on the Anglican site in due course...

It is intended that the proposed new School shall be conducted as an Aided Voluntary School and religious instruction will be given in school hours in accordance with the provision of section 28 (1) of the Act and in conformity with the Rites, Doctrines and Practices of the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church, as appropriate'.

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<sup>5</sup>The threat to St Bede's Sixth Form resulting from lack of LEA support for post-16 school provision and variable student rolls continued to cause anxiety for several years afterwards, as the second headteacher recalled in a personal interview (November 1992)

ii) Theological and ecclesiological considerations:  
The Bramley Seminar: November 1974

The legal decisions were now in the hands of the Secretary of State and attention turned to the weighty practical and theological questions involved in establishing an 'Ecumenical Secondary School'. In November 1974 a distinguished group of seventeen national, diocesan and local representatives including members of the hierarchy, clergy, educationists, advisers and senior teaching staff involved in the project, were invited to a three-day seminar at Bramley in Surrey under the auspices of the Catholic Education Council in 'an atmosphere of friendliness and charity'. The Catholic Secondary Schools Adviser suggested that his aims in convening the Seminar were twofold:

- a) 'to help the interested parties... to come together to assess the problems and to arrive at solutions which were theirs and not mine'
- b) 'to try to establish useful hints and advice which might be helpful at a national level.'

The conference was firstly presented with a paper on 'Christian Schooling' produced by the Roman Catholic Ecumenical Commission.<sup>6</sup> It struck a cautious note : multi-Church schools could not of themselves be the panacea for all religious divisions; indeed, if such a school were to be established within a community sharply divided on religious issues, the school would be more likely to foster divisions and delay rather than promote unity.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> A national body of the Roman Catholic Church responsible for developing, advising on and coordinating ecumenical cooperation.

<sup>7</sup> An interesting comment in the light of future developments in Northern Ireland at Lagan College.



'Many feel that, at the moment, it is only in 'ecumenically advanced' areas that we should even consider the possibility of some experiment in this field'.

The next observations throw significant light on the way in which ecumenical opinion was developing:

'All progress towards unity presupposes a solid grounding in a real appreciation of one's own tradition. The true value of ecumenical action is to be found in the coming together of traditions rather than in the elimination of differences'.

This must be true, it was urged, not only so that the pupils may be educated as members of their respective churches, but also so that the teachers are ecumenically 'aware' and in no way anxious that they will be asked to compromise their personal integrity by doing something they cannot honestly accept. The parents, for their part, would need to be educated in the new approaches to catechetical teaching because a lack of understanding on their part might lead to polarisation rather than ecumenical growth. These observations were to be prophetic of events as the joint Church school came into being.

The paper also outlined the main advantages and disadvantages of 'multi-Church' schools, again highlighting issues that became important in subsequent discussions. The advantages were listed as follows:

- a) The general ethos of such schools could provide as Christian a life-style as does the ethos of a one-Church school.
- b) The 'ecumenical education' involved, however informally, would match the ecumenical experience and situation of the churches in the area.
- c) It can be hoped that such a school, calling as it does for increased cooperation from parents and others, would stimulate further growth in the area.

- d) Such a school would itself be a witness to others of the degree of unity already experienced by Christians in the area.
- e) On general educational (and economic) grounds such a school might ensure a fuller general education for all concerned.
- f) In any number, such schools could eventually play a valuable part in preserving the truly Christian character in British education as a whole'.

These six points were balanced by an equally significant statement of the possible disadvantages:

- a) The very concept of such a school and the ensuring of a proper ethos would call for real 'ecumenicity' on the part of the teachers: they would need to be a united team and perhaps be prepared to forego transfer for promotion in the interest of the school's stability. Can this be sufficiently guaranteed? An 'indifferent' staff could do more harm than good.
- b) Would 'training in unity' lead to a degree of indifference even to the real grounds of our present division?
- c) While our large areas of doctrinal accord would be better appreciated, difficulties affecting practice would remain. What effect would these have on the life of the school?
- d) The support of Catholic parents for such a school would be essential. In most areas has the ecumenical education of the Catholic community (as opposed to a number of individuals) gone far enough to ensure this?
- e) Might a multi-Church school end up by being too inward looking and 'exclusivist' ( a charge that is sometimes levelled at one-Church schools)?
- f) There are obvious problems about religious education and school worship.

The second list suggests the strong misgivings that were still felt in some Roman Catholic quarters, perhaps especially on the part of those representing the hierarchy and therefore further from the educational situation 'on the ground'.

The paper of the Ecumenical Commission expressed particular fear that doctrinal divisions might be dismissed as if they were negligible. Loyal Roman Catholics might often desire to stress just those elements most distinctive of their position: in regard to the sacraments of eucharist, penance, confirmation; devotion to Mary; Church attitudes on such questions as authority and the special loyalty to the Holy Father. The Ecumenical Commission felt confident that there would be no special difficulty about the great social virtues such as Christian action for peace and social justice, or about matters of personal morality such as honesty and truth-telling. But, again, would a united school be able to witness with an uncompromising voice on contemporary issues of sexual morality such as birth-control and abortion? Almost all Anglicans, admittedly, regard abortion as morally justified only in rare and highly exceptional circumstances: the majority feel contraception is a matter that has to be left to the individual conscience judging in the light of Christian principles. Roman Catholics, by contrast, fear virtually any concession that there can be even very unusual circumstances in which abortion may be justified<sup>8</sup>, and, at the official as opposed to the individual level, feel bound to stand by Paul VI's Encyclical 'Humanae Vitae' (1968). Catholic individuals may in practice act in ways indistinguishable from their Anglican counterparts, but they nevertheless are normally much readier to acknowledge the teaching and legislative authority of the Church, articulated through the Holy Father and the Roman Magisterium, and endowed with power to lay down rules for personal behaviour.

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<sup>8</sup>This issue proved highly contentious for the Irish government, for example, throughout 1992.

It could be argued that a large number of children in Roman Catholic families no longer find it in the least easy to accept ethical norms presented even by the most excellent teachers, and find themselves instinctively and intuitively thinking of ethical norms as emerging from the moral judgements of their own reason and conscience; this carries the uncomfortable consequence that the immediate presence of numerous Anglicans can be felt to be a threat. In some sense the characteristic attitude of many Anglicans, that the Church is there to form and guide the individual conscience, but in a supporting rather than autocratic role, may easily seem to encourage in the Roman Catholic children at the same school precisely those attitudes which Roman Catholic authority has wished to discourage. The Roman Catholic Ecumenical Commission's paper articulated these anxieties : in the joint school Catholic children might not have their consciences formed in accordance with the Church's teachings, but would be left to splash about in a confused sea of open-ended discussion without norms or standards.

The paper spoke finally of the difficulties likely to arise with worship in a joint school. These would hardly exist in the case of assembly or 'para-liturgical services', but would become acute with the celebration of the eucharist . Roman Catholic authority was then, as it remains, strongly opposed to indiscriminate and unauthorised intercommunion. Underlying this opposition is a view of the nature of the Church according to which intercommunion presupposes the resolution of division.

The second Vatican Council's Decree on Ecumenism, subsequently reinforced by repeated papal statements culminating in Pope Paul VI's insistence in 1970 that the Anglican Communion is to be treated by Rome as a 'sister',

made it an obvious impossibility for the Roman Catholic Ecumenical Commission to adopt a public stance of disapproval towards the proposal for a joint school in which ecumenism might, of necessity, be forced to move beyond the stage of mere talk. Nevertheless the Commission remained tied down by the official inability of the Roman Catholic Church to acknowledge sacramental authenticity in an Anglican eucharist.<sup>9</sup> Fear was expressly articulated that at Redhill ecumenism might become 'indifferentism', in consequence of which distinctive themes of Catholic dogma and devotional practice might easily become submerged.

When he came to write his conclusions to the Seminar report, the National Catholic Secondary Schools Adviser wrote:

'I do plead that people do not rush into this kind of venture - it requires years of discussion and consultation if one is to receive the fullest support which is so essential to the success of this experiment'.

This comment came too late in the day. Perhaps it might be read as expressing anxiety at the fact that the prime motive and driving force which had originally impelled Roman Catholics at Redhill to cooperate in the proposal for a joint school had been much more educational and pragmatic than ecumenical. Without the joint school a substantial group of Catholic children in the area would be left without effective provision in religious education. For some of them, therefore, the proposal represented not an instrument for the realisation of an ecclesial ideal of Christian reconciliation, but 'faute de mieux' a school which at least claimed to provide

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<sup>9</sup>It is probably of some significance for the state of mind underlying the Commission's statement that no reference was then made to the recent publication (1971) of the Agreed Statement on the Eucharist issued by the Anglican Roman Catholic International Commission meeting at Windsor.

a Christian education. If, therefore, the joint school had to be accepted as an educational necessity, it was important to voice loud and clear the reservations that more conservative Roman Catholic minds would have on some central religious issues.

Nevertheless, it is also evident from the record that those fearful of the new venture were not the majority. That consultation procedures concerning the very viability of the scheme should be continuing after the Secretary of State had already formally received the proposals was somewhat bizarre and was immediately questioned by several Roman Catholics among those present at the seminar. That misgiving was shared by the Anglican headteacher, who also expressed the fear that the Seminar, while ostensibly purporting to be 'an exploratory exercise', was in reality attempting to lay down too definite and limiting a programme of action.

Confidential documents from the meeting show quite a number of the participants shivering on the brink, but there were two important positive outcomes: the establishment of a Working Party on Religious Education and the impetus for a public relations exercise to develop enthusiasm in favour of the scheme and particularly to encourage fund-raising (itself a useful criterion of the degree of enthusiasm and support). The good will of the community in Redhill was seen to be vital.

### iii) Practical considerations

On 7 May 1975 the Secretary of State for Education (Mr Prentice) finally gave his approval to the plan for the joint Church school. The delay had been caused by an extended period for objections. But once the decision had been

made, the pressure was strong to open the new school in September 1976. This meant fast and effective planning, including the drafting of the Instruments of Government which were finally sealed on 18 October 1975, in order that the necessary arrangements for staffing and curriculum could be completed in time. The new school was to have eighteen governors, six representing the Anglican diocese, six the Roman Catholic diocese and six the LEA, each appointed by their respective bodies.

Building considerations were also a high priority, especially facilities such as cloakrooms and craft workshops for the new influx of boys (still thought of in 1975 as a boys curriculum area). In retrospect one can recognise that the mid seventies was not the most auspicious moment to plead for funds for new buildings, even as a special case, from DES or LEA, particularly when the area as a whole was producing fewer pupils. The provision of temporary accommodation in the form of huts became inevitable. The headteacher expressed the view that the Surrey Education Committee had an unremarkable record in making provision for reorganisation. There was little or no awareness manifested of the problems associated with operating a split-site school. The 'pioneer status' of the joint Church school placed extra demands on material and staff resources, but again there was to be little positive or active response from the Authority. One head of department bluntly suggested that they showed no interest in the problems until as late as January 1977, when a week's inspection enabled staff to draw emphatic attention to their most pressing needs.

In any closure or amalgamation of a school, it is the teaching staff who normally need the greatest reassurance that, under the new regime, their

jobs and status will be safeguarded and their career prospects unaffected. Once the headteacher of the Anglican school had been appointed as head of the new school and the Roman Catholic headteacher as her deputy, attention could turn towards the more delicate operation of ensuring the best possible allocation of staff posts and also of allaying staff apprehensions about the consequences of the amalgamation. The LEA's general inspector interviewed all staff to ascertain their wishes. Sideways movement to other schools in the area was highly unlikely since they too were in the process of undergoing major reorganisation in 1976. In interviews with this researcher, staff claimed that there was never the least touch of animosity between individual staff on a personal level, but they would hardly have been human if there had not been some tensions over status. Interestingly, when the inspectors and governors of the joint school came to appoint the 'best' heads of department, all but one were Anglicans<sup>10</sup>. Some were not unnaturally resentful of this, and even attributed to the Anglican headteacher the motive of ensuring that the graduate Anglicans had the academic predominance when the new school came into being, while the Roman Catholic teachers were appointed to the main pastoral jobs (such as head of year). Others felt that the County should have removed both heads into advisory posts and then appointed new top personnel brought in from elsewhere, who would have no 'axes to grind' and no concern to continue policies inherited from the recent past. One comment was that 'no one really got what they wanted'. Several, who perhaps hoped that in the new school they would have new scope or larger opportunities, felt resentful and disappointed at the new arrangements. One commented with some asperity that the amalgamation had been skilfully 'sold' to the staff.

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<sup>10</sup>This imbalance was largely corrected by 1983. Also the earlier predominance of female staff had given way to equal numbers of men and women.



The two headteachers, who had been prime movers in the entire exercise, certainly took considerable trouble to try to allay the fears of individual members of staff by jointly interviewing all of them and introducing them to the head of the sister school with whom they would have to work. The Roman Catholic head, not unaware of the staff apprehensions, felt profoundly encouraged by the results of these conversations: 'Throughout these interviews and indeed throughout all the negotiations, a marked goodwill and spirit of charity was tangibly present, confirming the fact that the Holy Spirit himself was the originator of the enterprise' (private letter, 1976). The difference between this perception and that of some staff is perhaps not surprising in the circumstances<sup>11</sup>. The Anglican head recalled the tensions: 'birth inevitably involves pain' (personal interview, 1992).

As is the general pattern with amalgamations, it seemed necessary to maintain staff in their existing status, and this led to a situation with too many 'chiefs'. The same felt that the management would have produced a more efficient arrangement if they had been rather tougher with individuals, that 'they failed to grasp the bull by the horns' as one teacher put it, and did not sufficiently clarify job descriptions for senior staff from the two schools. In some cases potential was left untapped, while others had greater responsibility put on their shoulders in the larger school which was to prove excessive. Some teachers felt 'pushed out'; others nursed doubts that either of the two heads really possessed the practical administrative ability necessary for the complex operation of running a split-site school for the large number of 1140 pupils.

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<sup>11</sup>This researcher has worked in the middle and senior management of three schools, where the legacy of amalgamation was still evident even ten years on.

An outside observer might expect that staff attitudes would have been significantly pushed in the direction of distrust by the religious and denominational differences between the two communities. In fact it was not so. The evidence of investigations and oral evidence from staff showed that, if anything, religion was the principal factor making for the overcoming of tensions. The feeling 'we are all Christians together' enabled them to survive the most difficult and tense period. This religious sense of commitment may well be reflected in the staff attendance at meetings for prayer on Friday afternoons after school, which continued for two years after amalgamation. The capacity to absorb possible sources of religious conflict is illustrated by memorably witty asides, as when an Anglican member of staff looking through the new form lists in the staffroom commented, 'They all sound like the Mafia or the IRA.'

The Roman Catholic school was smaller than the Anglican, and for that reason alone it was inevitable that it should feel defensive. An almost trivial indication of this was that at morning assembly the Roman Catholic children would make the sign of the cross if a Roman Catholic priest were taking it, but otherwise tended not to do so. Certainly the Catholic school appeared to have lost more in the amalgamation: its premises, its head, its close parochial identity. Tensions caused by the amalgamation of two sets of fourth and fifth year pupils midway through their education are predictable, but, as one Catholic teacher commented, the Anglicans may well have felt that 'it was an invasion', an influx of working-class Catholic boys<sup>12</sup> into a predominantly

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<sup>12</sup>By 1976, St. Joseph's had changed markedly from its status eight years earlier: middle-class Catholic parents now sent academically able boys to Reigate Grammar or independent schools while St. Joseph's attracted more working-class children from Irish and Italian families recently settled in Redhill.

middle-class Anglican girls' school.

On the other hand, the united school appeared in a number of ways to be more Christian in spirit than either of the two schools separately had been before. An Anglican interviewee reflected that the Catholics brought with them a greater sense of spirituality, and that the Catholic staff were certainly more explicitly committed to the Church than several of the Anglicans. Some Anglicans were favourably impressed by the open attitude of many of the Roman Catholic staff when discussing controversial issues; they did not retreat behind the authoritative decisions of the Church or avoid debate. Many felt that the united staff showed a deeper concern and commitment to each other, to the children, and to the community than they had seen before. 'I have never met so much goodwill in any staff', commented one teacher interviewed in 1981; 'the emphasis is on resolving problems - there are no factions, and things here do not get out of proportion'.

Some of this goodwill was due to an amount of inter-staff practical cooperation encouraged by the head. Even before St. Bede's opened, it was pointed out at the first joint staff meeting, back in June 1975, that 'we are blazing a trail for Christian unity'. Departments were asked to prepare reports for discussion, including the justification of their subject's place in the curriculum, an analysis of traditional areas to identify irrelevant concepts, and a report on where their subject overlapped others in the curriculum. Working parties were set up to consider issues such as uniform, discipline and school rules, social education and training, the Sixth Form, guidance counselling and school assemblies. It was clear that such detailed and extensive discussions between staff, even before amalgamation

came about, created an open climate for the effective establishment of the joint school.

On 22nd October 1975, the governors of the new school met to appoint their first chairman, the late Canon John Montague. He later described his onerous responsibilities as 'the most creative activity in which I have engaged in over 40 years'. A statement of intent was made as follows:

'The Rev. Prebendary E.Tinker, on behalf of himself and Canon Jose, representing the joint promoters of the new school, presented a statement expressing the appreciation and thanks of the promoters to all those involved in bringing about the establishment of the new school, and setting out the aims and aspirations of the Diocesan Schools Authorities in the following terms:

'As the promoters of the United School we would like on behalf of our Diocesan Schools Authorities to put on record our profound gratitude to Almighty God for the imagination, tenacity and courage of those who have taken the initiative in bringing this new United Anglican/Roman Catholic School to this point of its inauguration. In particular, they would like to record the key part played in all the negotiations by Sr Jerome and Miss Hunt. Their friendship and mutual understanding and appreciation of each other's deep commitment to Christian Education have been of immense importance in the long journey to the establishment of the United school. Coupled with this tribute to them, we would like to record our appreciation of the very important and positive part played by the two Governing Bodies.

We would also like to record at the outset our hope that all will work consistently together both for the educational good of the school and for the deepening understanding of the two traditions of Christian Faith. It is agreed between the promoters of the school that every attempt shall be made to see that both Christian Churches will be fairly represented in appointments and positions of responsibility. However, since Church allegiance can never guarantee that a person has the particular skills needed for a particular job, we do not expect or think it right that there shall be a rigid commitment to alternating Catholics and Anglicans in particular posts. We hope that the person best qualified for each post will be chosen, so long as overall there is a reasonably fair balance between the representatives of the two Churches.

We recognise that in Worship and in Religious Education there is much that at the present time must take place separately, for conscience's sake, and because of church discipline. It is our hope,

however, that at least some worship and religious education can take place together, and that this area of what can be done together will be allowed to increase and expand naturally as the staff feel it right'.

Between 1972 and 1976, substantial progress had been made: the principles of the new school had been agreed, the legal requirements of government met, the staff brought into sufficient agreement, and the support of the diocesan authorities secured. The possibilities for the future were challenging at the moment when practical ecumenism took a step forward on 6th September 1976 as the new St. Bede's School opened its doors.

#### **b ) Establishing Ecumenical Religious Education**

It may seem surprising that so much attention was focused by diocesan and educational bodies on one subject in the curriculum. However, the previous pages indicate the high level of interest in the area of religious education and the realisation that this issue was one on which the ecumenical experiment could easily founder. If assurance was not given that their own denominational interests could be safeguarded, St. Bede's would not succeed. If the respective churches, both at parish and diocesan level, could not be confident, the school's position would be undermined.

Similar assurances were to be needed in Northern Ireland: Lagan College was to adopt the St Bede's model of common 'general RE' for all pupils, complemented by denominationally-specific instruction. Its founders also would have to provide support for Roman Catholic parents anxious about their children's religious formation outside their local parish network. The groundwork for both schools, it might be said, was done by the Working Party in Redhill back in the 1970s. We must now consider in detail the work

of this group and its outcomes.

i) The Working Party (1975-77)

The Religious Education Working Party (established in response to the Seminar at Bramley in November 1974) held its first meetings in March and April 1975. It included the two headteachers, the two heads of religious education, diocesan religious education advisers and representatives of the hierarchies. Its aim over several months was to produce a framework within which the teaching staff could produce a syllabus. It had been set up by the bishops of the two dioceses, with a view to reassuring clergy and parents that a body of experts was dealing with the question of religious education, which in the minds of some was a prime cause for misgiving. It was urgent to allay doubts.

The first meetings seemed all rather idealistic. The minutes of the first two suggest a lack of any firm steering or direction towards the issues most likely to need a firm basis for mutual understanding and confidence. There may well have been an underlying dread that the idealistic atmosphere in which everything had been discussed hitherto might be quickly shattered if the more obviously neuralgic sources of mutual discomfort were dealt with. Some of the more distinguished national figures serving on the Working Party were among those who acknowledged at interview that they felt the initial sessions were unstructured and desultory, and that no great progress would be made until the group got to work in a more systematic and businesslike way. There seemed to be a fatal propensity to take off into discussions of abstract principles of religious education and the theoretical principles and theology underlying it. What was vitally needed was the provision of some down-to-

earth guidelines which would help those responsible for teaching the 'flesh and blood children arriving at the front door fifteen months later.'

Some members of the Working Party seem not to have been perfectly clear about their objectives. This is suggested for instance, in the following excerpt from the minutes of the meeting in March 1975.

'The school's expectations of the end product are important. Are we prepared to let them find their own way forward or do we instruct the pupils only in the one Church? It must be remembered that we are thinking of one Church, one school, and things are being done more together now. Again, the parents come in here, so we have to tread carefully. We should perhaps work out the school's function, well reasoned and expressing what it hopes to achieve and its limitations. This way, people will understand that it cannot do everything. One of the positive sides of these expectations is that education is different from indoctrination'.

It may, of course, be unfair to judge the degree of clear thinking in the working party from a faintly incoherent paragraph in which a generous secretary tried to summarise the wandering thoughts of some participant in the debate. Nevertheless, an incisive view of the problems needing to be tackled did not yet seem to have emerged.

As we have already noted (in chapter IV), the Anglican and Roman Catholic views on the objectives to be achieved by religious education had by long tradition looked somewhat different. No one in 1975 seems to have ventured to articulate this difference. There was therefore a danger not only that the guidelines, once agreed, would be interpreted in divergent ways by the diocesan representatives of the two communions, but also that the teachers themselves would in practice understand them in hardly compatible ways. Traditionally the Roman Catholic school has been regarded by both clergy and

parents as the focal point for catechetical instruction. For the most part the expectations of the clergy have been that, if a child is going to a Church school, then not much further action needs to be taken about religious instruction. The parents have made similar assumptions, feeling that they have can happily hand over an onerous responsibility to more expert hands. Since Vatican II, the Roman Catholic Church in Britain has made increasingly serious efforts to reeducate its priests and parishioners in this regard<sup>13</sup>, but naturally old attitudes die hard. At Redhill the working party certainly sensed that considerable time and effort would be required by all sides if the distinct and complementary tasks of school and parish church were to be sufficiently appreciated, and if it were to be realised that a greater weight in respect of catechetical instruction and religious formation ought to be carried by the Church than by the school. Moreover, parishes vary. Active parish churches would be keen to take their responsibilities seriously, but inevitably others would have neither the material resources nor the personalities to respond effectively. Communicating with young people after they pass the age of 13 is a daunting task for a large number of parish clergy (and for some teachers too). The Roman Catholic representatives on the working party, moreover, did not really want the school to contract out of catechetical instruction altogether. They wanted guidelines which would allay the fears of their constituents, but that would be possible only if arrangements were made to 'ensure that no one is the loser, faith-wise, by this merger' (private letter of one participant, June 16, 1975). Religious education divorced from the specifically Roman Catholic context in which such instruction was customarily given seemed a potential threat,

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<sup>13</sup>For example, though the National Project of Religious Education and Catechesis begun in 1985 and the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults.



principally for the reason that it would not necessarily begin from the authoritatively defined doctrines in faith and morals laid upon the hearts and consciences of the faithful by popes and councils.<sup>14</sup>

At later meetings of the working party there was discussion of confessional versus non-confessional approaches to religious education. One Anglican expressed his opinion in the following terms: 'The Christian life is an interaction between tradition and the experience of the individual. The individual then arrives at his own personal faith. The school can at best put them on the right path on the which they will, hopefully, continue and grow', (minutes of 1 July 1975). The Roman Catholics did not think of the sacred tradition as something that would somehow assist individuals in working things out for themselves in the idiom that they happened to find most helpful. That would have seemed a replacing of 'I believe' by 'One does feel'. The Anglicans had not said that, but could have been so understood.

At the same meeting a Christian educationist drew attention to the problem of objectivity and neutrality in the class-room; teaching a faith is different from teaching about a faith: 'A teacher must control his own commitments so that he is dealing with the material and treating the children in a non-partisan way'. However, it is more difficult to talk in terms of objectivity or neutrality when one is dealing with subjects with a profound moral engagement. Obviously instruction should and can be non-partisan and fair-minded, objective in considering the facts. But RE teachers can hardly

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<sup>14</sup>As we have seen in the previous chapter, Cardinal Hume's speech to the 1st National Conference on Catholic Education in July 1992 reflected a similar view, that Catholic schools should still take responsibility for teaching children the doctrines of the Church.

introduce their pupils to fundamental questions of religion and ethics in exactly the same spirit as if they were explaining rows of beetles in a glass case. The Roman Catholics were anxious at any suggestion that such fundamental questions should be put before the children as if they were entirely open for detached debate when, in central issues, the teaching authority or magisterium of the Church had already laid down the answer. Among the Anglicans some talked as if the notion of a teaching Church was not part of their vocabulary. At the meeting on 19 September, the Catholic headteacher commented that 'the Catholic school exists for the purpose of teaching religious doctrine - our concepts of the Church school are totally different'. A gulf seemed to be emerging between the Roman Catholic and Anglican understandings of the role of Church authority in defining Christian truth, which had direct educational consequences for the way in which the Church school was expected to operate. Eventually the will to stay together proved stronger than the capacity to solve the theological and educational issue, and the September discussion was finally summarised in a manner which (no doubt pardonably) left the principal nettle ungrasped: 'There seems no reason why a predominantly Christian emphasis should not be educational, providing it is ecumenical... and open to the twentieth century'. The precise force of this oracular summary in the minutes is not now easily recoverable, but a possible interpretation could be that the Roman Catholics were in effect conceding

- a) that in the contemporary world, religious education could not effectively be taught in a way and with presuppositions which wholly differed from those governing other subjects in the curriculum;
- b) that elements in the Roman Catholic dogmatic tradition not shared in the same way by the Anglicans, such as the Marian

dogmas, could not be thrust forward in a militant manner;

- c) that Christian instruction would not be given as if it were a 'closed' system impenetrable to the moving progress of knowledge in the sciences.

If that, or something like it, is a reasonably correct approximation to the sense of the agreement reached, it seems both that the Roman Catholics had not 'given away' anything crucial to their faith, and that they were willing to modify their own attitude towards the issues in the light of discussion with the Anglicans.

It was one thing for the participants in the Working Party to wrestle through to a position of mutual understanding, quite another for them to be sure of having teachers to implement the policy, and quite a third thing for them to be confident of pacifying anxious parents and clergy. That a shift of position was acknowledged at the meeting appears in a sentence in the record: 'If we take too much notice of parents<sup>15</sup> and the clergy, we are going to run into a lot of trouble'.

A measure of the underlying feeling that the working party had been dealing with a potential minefield may be seen in the fact that on the day following, 20 September 1975, an influential and prominent Roman Catholic priest and theologian on the working party produced a short paper adopting a position on the main points of issue discussed on 19 September. The fact that he did so suggests some lack of confidence that the minutes of the meeting would make his points sufficiently clearly. At the same time the paper is remarkable for the hope and aspiration it expresses, reflecting (it would at least appear) a

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<sup>15</sup>It is interesting to note the contrast with Lagan College, where it was parents who took the lead in the move to integrated education.

belief that some of the thorny problems the working party had not at that stage solved were in principle soluble and would in time come to be looked at in a different perspective. The document marks an important stage in the working party's thinking, and deserves to be set out in full:

- '1. The extent of common faith between our two Churches is much wider than very many people yet appreciate. It is this that is the basis that makes possible a joint Church school, and makes desirable the **ultimate** ideal of a joint syllabus taught in common.
2. But there are substantial matters of division between our Churches. It is our duty to our respective constituencies to ensure that these matters on which we differ are treated neither as unimportant and irrelevant appendices nor in such a way as to make them 'flashpoints' (we do not wish to re-awaken the 16th century). For, in hard fact, these matters on which we differ do affect our whole presentation of religious truth to those we are instructing.
3. It is now less than twelve months before the joint school opens, and before very long the staff responsible, the governors, local clergy, etc. will need to have some practical details that will enable them to plan ahead and also to offer advice/ reassurance to interested (or worried) parents. It seems preferable, therefore, that from the start of the school the Catholic and the Anglican children should receive religious education **separately**. Separation need not mean isolation: this should be possible if care is taken to ensure -
  - i) that the overall aims of religious education are commonly expressed and accepted (cf. discussion of paper on 19 September)
  - ii) that the syllabuses are so arranged that, where possible, both deal with similar or common matter at the same time (e.g. the life of Our Lord; the sacrament of Baptism; basic moral issues). Within the course(s) in each year there should be quite a number of occasions when both are covering the same ground ('points of contact')
  - iii) that these 'points of contact' are used by the staff responsible not only for consultation and cooperation at staff level, but to promote exchange and interchange between the children. This would be important at any level, but vital in the senior classes; it could lead all to a maturing in faith by dialogue which, ideally, can 'invite all to a deeper realisation and a clearer expression of the unfathomable riches of Christ'. (cf. Vatican II, Decree of Ecumenism art.11)

Treated in this way, divided teaching need not be divisive, but could lead to a true maturing in the faith. At the same time it would make clear that no child, Anglican or Catholic, is being

offered a 'watered down' version of his faith.

4. The sort of exchange and interchange just mentioned would in part depend on and in part contribute to the whole Christian context or ethos of the school. (As yet we have spoken about this ethos, but have not really defined it; we must beware of taking the idea for granted in perhaps too general a way...)
5. This in turn is closely related to the expression of the school's Christian and Two-Church character in its worship. It looks as though Assemblies and 'special services' need present no problem. But questions about the Eucharist are sure to arise (and our Churches differ on the age of admission to Communion). Related to this are our respective attitudes (as yet undiscussed) to school chaplains, and to pastoral visits by other clergy from whose parishes some of the children come, not to mention 'class Masses', etc.
6. My purely personal point of view is that if we can reach sufficient agreement on the matters outlined in 3 above, many of the practical points alluded to in 4 and 5 should be patent of an initial solution: initial, since so much will develop with the developing life of the school as a whole.'

Despite the expressions of hope and confidence for the future development, the document at crucial points reflects a position which may fairly be called defensive in laying down a strong preference for separating Anglican from Roman Catholic pupils for RE from the beginning of the new school. The reasons given are that the differences between Anglicans and Catholics affect the whole way in which RE is conducted and the fear that parents could otherwise feel that their child was being offered no more than a 'watered down' version of the faith. Yet as far back as February 1973 the governors had thought separation for general RE highly undesirable. The document reflects a conservatism which regards a common ecumenical and educational strategy as being still out of reach. Nevertheless, it is capable of a more cheerful exegesis, namely that its author thought the attainment of the ultimate goal, towards which he is wholly positive, likely to be prejudiced if the stages of movement towards it were taken too quickly; in other words, if the joint school moved very far ahead of the two participating Churches. That

would mean that the defensiveness is more tactical than strategic.

The document states well the aspiration after a common syllabus simultaneously covering similar topics in Anglican or Catholic groups, to provide 'points of contact'. The argument shows an important intention to reduce division, that might otherwise seem to be advocated, to the minimum. The eventual decision to supplement periods of general RE taught to Anglicans and Roman Catholics together with one 'denominational' period taught to separated groups (agreed by January 1976) ignored this valid and useful point. As late as 1979 the two 'sides' were still teaching denominational RE in accordance with independently constructed syllabuses that bore little or no relation to each other.

On one further point, the document sowed a seed which bore fruit. The idea that dialogue, especially for senior pupils, would lead to a maturing in faith was later taken up, though probably not in just the way expected in September 1975. For, in September 1979, the separate 'denominational' teaching was integrated into examination courses for fourth and fifth year students. We shall see that this represented a sea-change in policy, and had the effect of encouraging the students' understanding both of their personal faith and of that of their communion, and their appreciation of ecumenical developments.

The document of 20 September 1975 indicated ecclesiastical and pastoral concerns and anxieties as much as educational considerations. The latter were brought to the fore in a paper prepared for the next meeting of the Working Party in October by Mgr. Kevin Nichols, National Catechetical Director,

reflecting experience of the classroom and awareness that religious education and catechesis are distinct, even when there may be some overlap in content.

This very different document also merits quotation:

1. One definition of 'catechesis' (as opposed to religious education) is that it is a dialogue between believers.<sup>16</sup> Evangelisation presupposes non-believers, and its aim is to convert them. Religious education does not necessarily presuppose either belief or non-belief. It aims to make a particular educational contribution to religious life.
2. In a Church school, the assumption is that a fair number of the children come from believing families and are themselves believers. There seems therefore to be a justification for both catechetical and educational elements in the curriculum.
3. Moreover, in a Church school, there will be a general context of Christian life. So, the education will be closely connected with worship and with the kind of community a school is.
4. The general approach to religious education in a Church school might be expressed as follows:
  - a) 'Being educated in religion' does not focus on commitment to one's own beliefs
  - b) It does 'home in' on one's own beliefs and this involves:
    - i) seeing how they differ from other beliefs
    - ii) understanding how one's own faith stands in the world of religion
    - iii) understanding how it relates to contemporary life
    - iv) consequently, being in a better position to 'adhere to God in a free act of faith'.
5. RE will in no way 'water down' the Christian (or the Anglican or the Catholic) faith. The full teaching, practice and tradition of the Church will be reflected in the curriculum. But this will be done in an educational way - aimed at better, deeper, and wider understanding and freer choice.
6. The balance between catechetical and educational elements may require separate optional courses.

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<sup>16</sup>cf. Nichols, K. (1979) Orientations, St. Paul Publications, p.12.

7. A possible summary of aims might be this:-

- a) An understanding of the teaching and practice of the Christian church and especially of the Anglican and Catholic Churches.
- b) An understanding of the world of religion and the distinctive place of Christianity in it.
- c) An understanding of the contemporary world and the place and problems of religion in it.
- d) A deeper understanding of the children's own experience and the way in which religious belief fits into this.
- e) Consequently, a freer and more informed faith which extends more effectively into life.'

This paper starts from the essential distinction that 'education in religion' is not focused on and directed towards commitment, but rather on a greater understanding of the way in which one's personal beliefs relate to the world. By making this distinction it made possible considerable progress in the thinking of the Working Party. Admittedly at the October meeting there was further argument over the ideal of 'rational autonomy' as being 'the goal of the educational enterprise'. However, by the end of that meeting, sufficient progress had been made to make it feasible to ask the teachers to prepare a possible joint syllabus for presentation at the next meetings in November and January. The time constraints made this urgent.

By January 1976, the last meeting of the Working Party, the heads of religious education from the two merging schools had been given the 'go-ahead' for three RE lessons a week, two periods with all pupils together and one period for denominational groups. The general syllabus covered five areas over a five-year course: (1) Creation (2) Sacramentality (3) Incarnation (4) Redemption and Freedom (5) The Theology of Work. The



value of examination work for older pupils was discussed, and the advisers emphasised the importance of external examinations. (Yet in 1980 thinking was still evolving concerning the relationship between examinations and specific denominational teaching.)

The governors of St. Bede's received the Working Party's report at their meeting in June 1976, only two months before the start of the first term. The group had met on seven occasions, and for the last three of its meetings had been joined by the RE specialists from the two schools. They had not succeeded in eliminating all possible sources of difficulty, but they had made real advances in thinking through some of the educational and practical issues.

Two sample excerpts may be quoted from their report:

'It is important to hold together both sound educational principle and theological integrity. Attention must be paid to the development of the children as well as to the content of the teaching; and the teachers must be able to feel that the syllabus is acceptable in terms of educational standards to their colleagues in the profession. The prime objective must be to develop understanding, and in the learning process controversy and argument have a significant part to play. But the school is committed to the faith that Jesus Christ is the Truth, as well as the Way and the Life. The Christian tradition will, therefore, be presented for explanation and understanding by the pupils, against the background of the firm conviction of the teachers that Jesus and the Truth are one'. (Item 4.)

'While the school is committed to the presentation and commendation of the Christian religion, clergy and parents must realise that they cannot devolve all responsibility for the Christian education of the young people onto the School. The Churches themselves and parents must share in the task of nurturing the Christian faith of the young people. In particular, the Churches have an important role to play in encouraging commitment and movement towards church membership. The school, on the other hand, while accepting a share in fostering Christian commitment, must encourage the exploration of Christian beliefs and practices critically and openly (an openness which must include an awareness of other religions) and in ways suitable to the pupil's personal development'. (Item 9)

Probably this was as far as anyone could have been expected to go in bringing together two traditions in Christian education before actual interaction in the classroom was experienced.

ii) Ecumenical Religious Education in practice

One year after the ecumenical school opened its doors, four members of the RE working party returned, in September 1977, to evaluate the practical consequences of its recommendations. They expressed 'delight' at the team spirit which, they felt, had contributed to a 'remarkable unity of thought and purpose', and congratulated the department on the way they had been coping with the novel and potentially difficult situation. The balance of general and denominational periods appeared satisfactory, and the syllabus was evolving well. However, problems were occurring in the fourth and fifth years (in common with many senior schools), where pupil resistance to RE, even from those coming out of Christian homes, was considerable. The RE department requested support from the Working Party committee for introducing examination courses in Religious Studies, a request which was fully endorsed as being likely to encourage pupils to treat the subject more seriously and so to increase their motivation.

Another area of concern to the evaluating committee was the cooperation between the staff. The committee suggested that the Anglicans and Roman Catholics should give time to a sympathetic exploration of each other's beliefs, and even that each individual teacher should be willing to undertake a radical reassessment of his own beliefs; this would lead to a situation where the thinking of staff and pupils might forge ahead of that of the parishes and parents, immobilised in the age-long tradition of group rivalry. The need for

adult education reaching out to the parents and clergy was to become increasingly important as the experience of teaching RE in an ecumenical school encouraged new initiatives.

The sun did not shine all the time. Within the first three years of the new school, the RE department, which was inevitably the most sensitive area of the school's work in relation to its constituencies, suffered a series of setbacks. At the initial planning stage the hope had been expressed that the school would retain staff with the vision to see the school's task as a service to the Church. In practice, it was hardly practicable to ask individual teachers to forego opportunities for promotion which would affect the provision they could make for their dependants. The change-over of staff within the department caused tensions and upheavals. At amalgamation the Anglican head of department had been designated 'head of faculty'. He left for promotion elsewhere in early 1978, and the advertisement for his replacement described the post as 'Head of Religious Education'. Not unnaturally there was considerable confusion in the mind of the staff about the position of the surviving Roman Catholic head of department, who perhaps very reasonably expected the reversion of the post with responsibility for the department. The person appointed under the terms of the advertisement was an Anglican woman who took over in April 1978. She quickly found that she had been placed in an embarrassing and untenable position, and resigned at the end of the summer term, leaving the Roman Catholic sister in charge of the department. The sister too, however, moved on to another school at Christmas 1978. Various supply teachers were appointed as stop-gaps. In practice, they fulfilled a role far beyond that of merely temporary teachers. Such was their personal quality that each contributed very effectively to the

team spirit of the RE staff over the next year. Nevertheless, the situation could hardly be anything but delicate.

In April 1979 a new 'Head of Religious Education' (the present researcher) was appointed and took up the post. At the interview vague hints had been made that all had not been well in the department, and that there was an urgent need for effective control to be established. Even so it cannot have been easy to envisage the extent of the restructuring required. Any ideas that it would be possible to build on the progress made so far soon had to be scrapped. So much ground had been lost that it was necessary to return to the foundations and to build up the teaching of RE almost from scratch. The general syllabus needed modification to give it a reasonably coherent pattern. The previous plan had been more pastoral than academic in character and, while the intention was laudable enough, it resulted in few of the pupils taking the subject particularly seriously. They did not expect RE classes to add to anything that could be called 'knowledge'. Some tact was needed, therefore, to make the syllabus rather more academic without undermining or jettisoning the valuable pastoral tradition and experience already built up.<sup>17</sup>

In the fourth and fifth years the situation had become particularly disordered. By April 1979 the single weekly denominational period was being timetabled as a double period each fortnight because of the constraints of a split-site school. The pupils were divided into Anglicans and Roman Catholics for this one occasion and were being taught by teachers who normally only saw them

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<sup>17</sup>This was also important as the 'secondary-modern' intake became more 'comprehensive' in ability.

once a fortnight. It was immediately apparent that this made no educational sense. In addition, the published denominational syllabuses bore little relation to each other or to the general syllabus, while actually the Anglicans in particular had to all intents and purposes abandoned any pretence of doing specifically Anglican teaching and were using the time to continue with the C.S.E. work on St. Luke's Gospel. Moreover, the 'denominational' issues which their Roman Catholic counterparts were covering were all such that the Anglicans would have found them equally appropriate<sup>18</sup>. Besides the denominational teaching, those who had chosen to do examination work for O level were doing four lessons of O level work, two lessons of general C.S.E. work, and one lesson of denominational RE, amounting to more than a fifth of their curriculum time. Overkill on this scale required urgent reconsideration.

At this time the denominational teaching was not working effectively either, but a solution to this problem seemed related to several other difficulties. If a major shift in school policy regarding RE could be carried through, however, perhaps all or most of the problems could be resolved in a single overall plan. Such a change of policy required the confidence and assent of the governors. In May 1979 the researcher sought and was granted the opportunity of explaining the position to the school governing body. The proposal submitted ran as follows: if the denominational RE (DRE) could be integrated into the examination courses for the fourth and fifth years (so that, for example, the sacramental aspects of Christian marriage could be taught within the syllabus section about Jesus' teaching on marriage and the

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<sup>18</sup>Mainly moral and social issues (that would now be termed P.S.E.) but related specifically to the Church's teaching on these subjects.

family), then the pupils would not only learn more but would relate the academic knowledge to their own spiritual development, while at the same time they could amicably discuss with each other differences in the approach of Anglicans and Roman Catholics.

There were, however, to be three important safeguards. Firstly, the two chaplains were to be invited in to discuss these issues of difference with the mixed groups of pupils, while at the same time they were also available for private consultation with individuals if further information or counselling were required. Secondly, if Anglican teachers were to be discussing specifically Roman Catholic positions and Roman Catholic teachers explaining what they understood to be distinctively Anglican, then it was essential that the staff meet together regularly to exchange ideas. This came to be the start of the seminar groups run by the two chaplains to provide a vital underpinning on controversial matters for the teaching staff. In addition, these seminars enabled prejudices to be aired and clouds of misunderstanding to be cleared away<sup>19</sup>. Thirdly, there was a feeling that specific denominational teaching at a senior level was more effectively done outside the classroom - for instance on 'awaydays' out of school with staff and chaplains, to enable pupils to talk more openly and to share their personal feelings about religious questions in less formal circumstances. 'Awaydays', at which the pupils would go together with staff to visit some place of religious significance, were to develop into an important feature of the RE department.

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<sup>19</sup>One Anglican RE teacher reflected: "I learned an enormous amount about Roman Catholicism, which was very helpful when we came to teach a GCSE syllabus on Christian denominations" (personal interview, November 1992).

After many questions and considerable discussion, the governors finally endorsed the proposals and consented to a two-year experimental period for their implementation. Denominational teaching would now be timetabled separately only during the first two years of the pupils' time at the school.

An immediate consequence of this was the need to determine what should be the essential elements covered by the DRE syllabus while the pupils were still in segregated Anglican and Roman Catholic groups during their first two years. It was desirable that, so far as possible, the denominational syllabus should be common to the two groups - a suggestion closely akin to that put to the working party in the document of 20 September 1975 considered above, but not implemented hitherto<sup>20</sup>. For example, baptism and Church membership constituted a shared experience for most of the children: there seemed everything to be said in favour of arranging that Roman Catholics and Anglicans would discuss this at the same time; they could then talk it over with each other. Careful thought was required to define the main areas of denominational concern, especially areas in which there was a history of past controversy. On the significance of baptism there ought not to be disagreement between Roman Catholic and Anglican, nor concerning the pastoral significance of the sacramental act of confirmation by the bishop. But there would be diversity of liturgical custom, whether confirmation be by laying on of hands with prayer or by chrismation with consecrated oil, and also a traditional difference not in doctrine but in practice about the age of confirmation and admission to communion. The Council of Trent recommended

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<sup>20</sup>Interestingly, the researcher was at that time unaware of the 1975 paper and acting on professional common sense!

that confirmation occur between the ages of 7 and 12, normal Roman Catholic use, while a later age was common among Anglicans, although the local Roman Catholic diocese was moving to confirmation at 13<sup>21</sup>. There would again be scope for some differences in style, if not in fundamental approach, between Anglican and Roman Catholic in their way of thinking and speaking about Biblical authority and the role of Tradition. In regard to the central question of the Eucharist, the rapprochement achieved by the theologians in ARCIC was only slowly percolating through to the consciousness of the Churches at the grass roots level<sup>22</sup>. On questions of Reconciliation, the traditional divergence between the Roman Catholic 'you must' and the Anglican 'you may' in regard to sacramental confession and absolution reflects variant conceptions of the necessary role of the priest. While both communions share an episcopally ordered ministry and set high value on the continuity and unity of which the bishop is intended to be sign and instrument, there is an obvious history of long disagreement between Roman Catholics and Anglicans about the conditions for the possession of valid ministry and an authentic Eucharist. Nevertheless, in even these areas, the amount of common ground greatly exceeds that of disagreement and divergence. By every educational criterion it was highly desirable to formulate a shared syllabus of topics for the segregated periods of instruction; and with so much common ground this would not be too difficult to achieve.

The new proposal did not come into being without some anxiety being

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<sup>21</sup>NB. This was prior to the recommendation for such a move at the National Pastoral Congress, Liverpool 1980.

<sup>22</sup>One Anglican priest in a parish near St. Bede's commented that such ARCIC agreements provided a valuable stimulus to ecumenical cooperation in the area.



expressed. There was bound to be fear that the specific was being pushed out in favour of something more general and therefore vaguer, perhaps just that kind of common Christianity which hopes to find unity in 'fundamentals', defined as those doctrines on which no important disagreements seem to emerge between groups who in fact disagree on many issues that are certainly not felt to be optional extras by those who consider them seriously. A Roman Catholic diocesan team which visited the school in February 1981 commented that 'it will be necessary to reflect continually on the denominational aspect of the syllabus in order to ensure full integration of different parts of the programme in the second and third years.'

The extension of integrated denominational teaching to the lower school could not be pressed without running up against the anxieties of the parents and clergy. The less they knew about the school, the more anxious they felt. This was particularly evident among the Roman Catholic parents who, like others even in single denominational schools, were finding it difficult to understand how religious education had shifted away from the catechetics of their own school days. They proved very ready to express their sense of alarm to their parish priest, and to put the blame on the school if a son or daughter were to begin to ask awkward questions or even to cease to practise the Christian faith. The lack of independent denominational instruction throughout the school was an inviting scapegoat for their apprehensions. The point again brings out the difficulty that the ecumenical school may tend to push ahead of the uniting churches that have come together to form it, and therefore underlines the essential importance of educating and keeping the confidence of the community beyond the school gates, a role the second headteacher, Dr. Phil Dineen, took very seriously. She recalled, 'I was pleased to have got the

RE right at the right time' (interview 1993).

In the autumn of 1982 two open evenings were held for all parents and clergy who wished to find out more and to discuss the nexus between the school, the home, and the parish. These useful sessions<sup>23</sup> not only provided information and clarified the RE programme, but also gave parents the direct opportunity to express their fears to the teachers. The parents not unnaturally tended to rely more on their feelings and on their apprehensions as to what might be the case than on actual knowledge of what was really going on. Conditioned by upbringing and some centuries of traditional rivalry, it might be expected that they would approach the question of an ecumenical school with some prejudice and inaccurate information. If an ecumenical school is to be successful, it needs to develop the understanding of Christian faith within the surrounding community.

The search for suitable resources to use in the classroom is difficult enough for the RE teacher in a state or denominational school. How much more problematic for a school that has to give a balanced picture of two denominational traditions while retaining academic respectability for the subject and the interest of the pupils. Text books for the general religious education course were easily obtainable: the traditional academic syllabus of introduction to the Old and New Testaments (including the life of Christ), world religions and moral and social issues has always been well resourced by the publishers of RE materials. The denominational elements on the other hand required further research. The main Anglican contributions to this area

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<sup>23</sup>These meetings were later extended to new parents in the July prior to the admission of their child.

attempted to present materials of contemporary interest but their layout and approach were unimaginative<sup>24</sup>. On the Roman Catholic side, however, a more determined effort had been made to produce resources and syllabuses that followed pupils' own concerns as well as providing them with the necessary knowledge and understanding to encourage informed discussion.

Two particular publications proved useful for DRE. An attractive and contemporary syllabus entitled 'In Christ' had been produced by the Roman Catholic diocese of Birmingham in 1979. While covering the essential denominational elements of the sacramental teaching of the Church (e.g. baptism, reconciliation, eucharist, priesthood), it presented its ideas in a way which stimulated the interest of secondary pupils. The other publication, the 'Veritas' scheme, had been introduced successfully into primary/middle schools during the late seventies and was beginning to have an impact at secondary level. This too presented catechetical ideas in a contemporary context, involving the pupils rather than instructing them as had been the tendency in much previous Roman Catholic classroom material.<sup>25</sup> Such resources were helpful in producing a viable denominational course, particularly for the second and third year pupils. Both Anglicans and Roman Catholics could follow a common syllabus while emphasising their distinctive traditions and producing work which reflected

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<sup>24</sup>A leading Anglican spokesman on RE commented to the researcher in 1992 that, since Anglicans tend to see themselves as 'the church of the nation', there seems some hesitation in producing denominational materials for specific use in church schools rather than county schools, particularly in the secondary sector.

<sup>25</sup>The establishment of the National Project of Religious Education and Catechesis (1985) was still in the future. Its publications e.g. Our Schools and our Faith, 1988, and Guidelines 1988 for the Weaving the Web programme were widely welcomed by R.E. teachers, even if criticised by more traditional and conservative Roman Catholics (The Tablet, 22 February 1992).

their interests.

iii) Religious Education beyond the classroom

In a Church school above all, a balance needs to be sought between the academic and the pastoral dimensions of religious education. Either one without the other renders the enterprise invalid. Children must relate their understanding of religious ideas to the local community and to the world. The three-way relationship between school, home, and parish, has to be seen and felt by the child to be effective. But in practice this relationship is not always easy to maintain.

At St. Bede's it became apparent by the summer of 1979 that the parish involvement in the school was, to say the least, haphazard. Some clergy might come to take an assembly; others might attend the wine-and-cheese evening each autumn. But there was still a number whose contact with the school and, more important, with the students coming from their own parish, was minimal or even non-existent. To attempt to rectify this became a major logistical exercise, for the school was attracting students from over 50 parishes across two dioceses. The RE department decided to organise a day in their own parish for all 240 twelve-year old pupils, i.e. the new intake year, so that in the first term of their secondary education, they might realise that a Church school had something to do with the Church, and therefore had a dimension additional to those of a county school. Their Church school was not only a place for the pursuit of academic experience and a house of pastoral concern, but was also linked with a wider believing community which expressed its Christian faith in everyday life from cradle to grave.

The majority of the parish clergy responded favourably to the idea, and the second Monday in November 1979 was set aside for the first of what were to become annual parish days. It was not expected that any specific catechetical activity should be included, since the day was compulsory for all the pupils. However, it provided an invaluable opportunity for both 'sides' to explore the link between the Church and the school. Above all, it introduced the local priest to his flock, some of whom he would know well, others hardly at all.

An interesting further development was initiated by the clergy themselves in 1980. Where small numbers of pupils were involved, it seemed sensible for parishes of different denominations to combine their efforts and, by sharing manpower, to give the day an ecumenical flavour. These programmes proved particularly successful and by 1981 were extended to include the Protestant Free churches as well as Anglican and Roman Catholic parishes. The personal commitment to these days by the clergy was impressive and, as the school chaplains were able to take an increasing responsibility for the organisation at the school end, the links between the Christian community within the school and the parishes were substantially strengthened. They also illustrated how the joint school was able to take on a 'prophetic' role in enhancing local ecumenical cooperation.

Apart from these parish days, extra-curricular 'awaydays' were also developed for more senior year-groups. Third year pupils, making decisions about their public examination courses and possible future careers, and fourth year pupils, coping with the heavy pressure of examination work, were offered residential experiences with the aim of challenging them to think through the material and spiritual values underpinning their decisions

and relationships. This process of self-analysis demanded considerable maturity and the support by RE staff, pastoral teams and chaplains. In the fifth and sixth forms, residential opportunities, including a pilgrimage to Lourdes or a weekend in the soup-kitchen of St. Martin-in-the-Fields, allowed older students to appreciate the importance of the spiritual and personal alongside their academic development.

What then, were the essential perceptions of the RE task in a joint Church school that developed at St. Bede's in those early years? To summarise,

- If religious education in a Church school, and especially an ecumenical one, was to be effective, it had to succeed in the classroom by producing high standards of work and by being accepted by the students as a serious academic subject.
- At the same time, it had to look at the whole person and contribute to the student's spiritual development which generally took place beyond the classroom.
- This wide-ranging responsibility required a dedicated team of teachers who not only had good academic qualifications, but also related easily to young people.
- Alongside these requirements, such teachers evidently needed to have a mature understanding of their own faith and a commitment to ecumenism that went far beyond merely working alongside each other.
- But naturally such maturity and commitment were a matter of dynamic growth rather than static possession, and could be born and fostered in the experience of teaching at an ecumenical school, provided that the person concerned was seriously willing to listen to what 'separated' Christians had to say.
- Finally, the ecumenical task is one of great difficulty, requiring sensitivity and hard work, a resolution to remain undiscouraged by the virtually inevitable setbacks, and a vision that the ultimate end of Christian unity is possible.

**c) School chaplaincy and ethos**

**i) The chaplaincy role, worship and community liaison**

'Wasting time usefully' was how one chaplain described his job when interviewed in 1981. Great discipline was required to ensure that he was not doing something all the time and really was available to staff or students. Without the detailed timetable that other members of staff had, the chaplains felt their role was to be at the service of all in the school community whenever they were needed. This availability was cardinal to the success of their task.

A national Memorandum on school chaplains by the Roman Catholic Hierarchy's Education Commission, circulated in February 1979, spelt out the chaplain's role as one of service -

- i) 'to be an evangelist and an example of Christian living;
- ii) to encourage and stimulate the individual and group to live a Christian life of prayer and action;
- iii) to be adviser and counsellor to the individual pupil or member of staff on matters of faith and Christian living;
- iv) to be a reconciler in a community within which, because of its size and artificial nature, communication at all levels is frequently very difficult;
- v) to be a bridge between school and home and between school and the parish. It is particularly important to help pupils become properly integrated into their own parish life, particularly at the time of leaving school.

In essence, his role is to assist in the building up of the school as a worshipping community in which the celebration of the Eucharist is a genuine expression of the faith of the school'.

This document highlighted several of the opportunities and difficulties that a chaplain in any Church school was likely to encounter and which in an

ecumenical community required additional sensitivity.

From the beginning of the joint Church school, two chaplains were appointed. The head, Madge Hunt, had committed to paper in March 1976 some thoughts on the role of the chaplains, emphasising the importance of links with the parish priests, involvement in denominational Religious Education, more general areas like community service, and availability for spiritual advice and counselling. She pointed out that the role could not be precisely defined, for it depended greatly on the personal gifts and inclinations of the individual. By 1980 the then headteacher, Phil Dineen, was able to report to governors: 'We are conscious of the heavy demands we make on our present chaplains and of how fortunate we are to have within our school community two such able, popular, and dedicated pastors.' There can be little doubt that without them and the way in which they approached their work innumerable problems would have arisen.

The qualities required of a school chaplain were obviously formidable.

'He must want to be with young people and willing to learn about their environment. He must be able to accept them as they are and listen to them sympathetically and with understanding. He should be a man in whom dignity and humility meet and whose authority derives from his closeness to God. He must be willing to be subject to the proper authority of the Headteacher and ready to work with him for the Church in the school community' (Memorandum of February 1979).

Such qualities were not found in all priests. Particularly in the ecumenical context, the Christian community of the school could suffer serious damage if an ineffective appointment was made.<sup>30</sup> Phil Dineen, interviewed in 1993,

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<sup>30</sup>The researcher's 12 year's experience in three Church schools, two with and one without chaplain, suggests that Christian witness is more effective with no chaplain than with a poor one.



recalled that the Roman Catholic diocese did not always offer its best clergy to St. Bede's; they seemed 'totally untrained' and often immature in their faith as well as socially. 'When we had the right people, it worked superbly'. The need for a breadth of vision and sense of initiative could not be overemphasised, for the students quickly responded to the inner strength such qualities reflected.

One chaplain, when asked in 1982 how he saw his role in the school, replied in the following terms:

'As a chaplain you haven't got a niche. You're everything or nothing. At the end of the day, how do you measure what you have achieved? Teachers can aim for examinations and measure themselves by results. A chaplain cannot measure what he does so easily. My aim is just to be alongside, to pray with people and for people, but one's effectiveness cannot be measured'.

Prior to 1981 the chaplains in the joint school had no base in the building from which to work, which considerably exacerbated the problem of having no 'niche' - there was not even a perch. Discussing personal concerns with individuals in a corner of the cloakroom or after displacing the deputy head from his office underlined the unsatisfactoriness of the position. By the end of 1981, cloakroom space had been reallocated as a chaplain's room, and pastoral counselling was able to develop more effectively and with greater respect for the feelings of the counselled.

Inescapably, the problem of confidentiality and liaison with the pastoral heads of year or form tutor became a cause of difficulty. Should the chaplains pass on information to a head of year about glue-sniffing among those whom they were counselling? What was the relation between chaplain and teacher when confidences about pregnancy or truancy were entrusted to the priest's

ear? One of the Roman Catholic heads of year in 1981 unhesitatingly considered chaplains should always be seen to be separate from the year system. If the pupil confided in the chaplain as a priest and the confidence was given in the form of sacramental confession and reconciliation, then it could not be passed on. And it was not only when the confidence was in this context that the priest was bound to keep silence: the chaplains had to use their own discretion and do what they believed to be best, but 'it only takes one child to feel betrayed....' (as one chaplain put it), and in delicate cases it was thought wisest for the chaplain not to involve the school authorities.

The chaplains' responsibilities also extended into the staff room. New teachers often needed and responded to the support shown to them. A helping hand and encouraging comment were sometimes even more welcome from someone not involved in assessing one's success as a probationary teacher. Chaplains worked alongside staff in a variety of ways: sometimes standing in for an absent teacher when the pressure was severe; participating in 'Awayday' excursions and camping weekends; or team teaching especially in the denominational RE (by now called DRE) lessons. Staff goodwill was important if there was to be a sympathetic response to the disruptions caused by religious services and, if the chaplains were seen to be involved in the demanding tasks of teaching and counselling, then staff would respond positively and welcome the additional support.

Apart from these qualities, the chaplain's practical tasks included responsibility for **worship**. Celebrating the eucharist is the focal point of the community of faith. However, in an ecumenical context, it is not enough for the Anglicans to see ministry in terms of Anglicans only, nor for the

Roman Catholics in terms of their own flock. In an ecumenical school both have to be able to see beyond their own traditions to the Church united in Christ, even if the road towards such unity seems hard and long. A policy of caring only for those of one's own denomination may underline and entrench division.

At St Bede's the two main denominations at first came to celebrate the eucharist separately at the beginning and end of every term as well as on days of obligation, and prior to 1981 these services were compulsory, leading to an atmosphere of pupil hostility and staff resentment<sup>31</sup>; but the introduction of a **voluntary** eucharistic celebration was perceived to encourage large numbers of pupils to take a more active part in the liturgy, creating an atmosphere of prayerful worship rather than one of tension such as existed in the days of compulsion. In addition, weekly celebrations were held before school for smaller groups of students whose commitment and enjoyment acted as a magnet to others.

It is provocative to notice that regular Church attendance on Sundays was no guarantee of involvement in school worship. Approximately half of the pupils who came to the school eucharists in the 1980s did not attend a Church regularly, perhaps feeling that, if they participated at school, it would be overdoing it to go to Church as well. Others who were regular Church

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<sup>31</sup> 'It was like sitting on top of an active volcano', said one Anglican teacher required to supervise pupils of 'all denominations' other than Roman Catholic at the Anglican eucharists in 1980. Roman Catholic staff interviewed in 1992 commented that school services were much improved from the days when Catholic staff used to take it in turns to supervise pupils in the mass because 'the children were so awful'. Some priests found it difficult to make services relevant to young people and the subsequent disciplinary problems were hard to manage .

attenders might not necessarily come to school celebrations, because they preferred to see worship in the context of the family rather than something shared with their friends and school contemporaries.<sup>32</sup>

When the two eucharists for the whole school were made voluntary in 1981, they were timed to fit into an extended morning break to lessen the amount of supervision required for the non-attenders. However, this meant competing (in many cases unsuccessfully) with the iced buns on sale in the canteen. The services were subsequently moved into the place of assembly or form time during the first session in the morning. This had the effect of ensuring the service was seen more as an official activity of the school, while retaining its voluntary character, thereby encouraging more active support from the students. (Although other arrangements were tried in the meantime, the school had reverted to this scheme by 1990.) The Roman Catholic chaplain also pioneered joint services of reconciliation particularly during Lent, which, though non-eucharistic, enabled students to contribute readings and music in an atmosphere free of tension. These were most successful, for example, attracting over a hundred pupils to celebrations of Christian fellowship in 1982.

Several times in the early history of St. Bede's, the staff (sometimes together with the Sixth Form) attended their own celebrations of the eucharist at which great efforts were made to do everything together which could be done together without offending consciences and the authoritative rules which restrict intercommunion. These services were especially held to

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<sup>32</sup>This latter response seemed to be more the expectation in Northern Ireland and therefore eucharistic worship was not a priority for Lagan College.

mark significant occasions such as the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in January. Initial attempts at such joint celebrations in 1980 were markedly unsuccessful. At first the Ministry of the Word was celebrated with everyone, Anglicans and Roman Catholics together, and the hope for unity was pledged in the Kiss of Peace (this being transferred to its normal Anglican position before the offertory rather than kept in its normal Roman Catholic position between consecration and communion). But then the two groups turned their backs on one another, facing in opposite directions towards their respective celebrating priests. The experience was one of sharp pain and not a few tears. A new Anglican chaplain was appointed in 1980 and a year later a new Roman Catholic: both were able priests who together felt these liturgical arrangements were wholly unsatisfactory. After respective consultations, they produced a form of service for a 'parallel eucharist', in which both traditions could be respected yet common liturgy said together. The two altars were narrowly separated, the celebrants used their respective liturgical forms alongside each other and communicants received from their respective priests without embarrassment. Therefore, by 1982, the sensitivity and experience of the two chaplains made it possible for things to be done in such a way that the worshippers came away inspired to hope and pray for unity instead of feeling that their highest aspirations had been disregarded. Phil Dineen described it as 'the most poignant statement of ecumenism and its limitations; a moving and thought-provoking experience' (interview 1993). Such services were also opportunities for local parish clergy to come into the school to share in the community act of worship. Once staff and other adults felt comfortable with the appropriateness of these services held on special occasions about three times a year, it was decided to open them to Sixth Formers. This again worked well since these older

students respected the denominational 'boundaries', yet appreciated the significance of the joint service.

In addition to the chaplain's role in leading worship and presiding over the eucharistic celebrations, there was the responsibility for **liaison with the Christian community** beyond the school walls. In 1981, pupils came from 42 Anglican parishes, 13 Roman Catholic parishes, and 19 Protestant Nonconformist congregations. Communication, therefore, between the school and the local clergy could hardly be anything but an administrative and pastoral nightmare.

In 1982 the Anglican chaplain, combining his work in the school with part-time responsibilities as a local curate, made a point of visiting as many Anglican churches as possible to preach or assist with services. Local deanery meetings also provided a useful forum for discussion of the development of St. Bede's and a chance for the chaplain to pick up any cause for concern that needed to be communicated to the head for the sake of the pupils. Meanwhile the Roman Catholic chaplain, working part-time at the diocesan Religious Education Centre, also proved his sterling worth in the field of public relations. From her point of view, Phil Dineen recalled: 'As head of a joint school, I had to spend more time with Catholic clergy than I would have as head of a single Catholic school; they needed so much reassurance' (personal interview, January 1993).

Both chaplains saw it as part of their work to forge links with the First and Middle Schools, which not only broadened their contact with the children in the parishes, but also proved invaluable when helping the new second year

pupils at St Bede's to settle into secondary school; it was reassuring for the 12 year olds to see a familiar face on the first day inside a new institution where everything was otherwise strange. The chaplain's role in coordinating the parish day has already been noted for its effectiveness in linking all the parishes with the school and encouraging new ecumenical partnerships.

To conclude, it became self-evident that the chaplains in a joint Church school had a key role. To quote from the Roman Catholic Ecumenical Commission's Working Party on Joint Schools (1979):

'He is not teacher nor administrator but priest. His first task is to celebrate. His celebration of the liturgy must tap all the riches of his own communion. Yet he also has a pastoral role. He knows himself to be a Minister of a particular Church, and his first responsibility is to his fellow-members. But he has a responsibility for all those in the school. Especially he must relate to the head and the staff, trying to discern prophetically the call of God in policies and problems. He also has a crucial role in relation to the local clergy. It is to help them to understand what is going on in the school; to involve them in the pastoral care of the young people who are students there'.

The essential qualities required in a chaplain have not changed. Yet effective communication with young people and a prophetic grasp of the opportunities for ecumenical cooperation have not been seen as characteristic of all St Bede's chaplains. Experience has suggested that when the bishops have appointed 'good' chaplains, their prophetic insight has taken the whole enterprise forward in its exploration of paths to unity in truth. 'Poor' appointments not only stalled but put back the process.

## ii). School ethos: shared Christian values

Parents turn towards Church schools for the education of their young because they set a high price on the values that will be emphasised in such schools. Some react with apprehension as they contemplate the secular comprehensive

school because it seems so large as to be impersonal, almost a kind of knowledge factory or bazaar of training in diverse skills, but without itself having an allegiance to an overt, coherent moral ideal. They further react with fear before the laxities of the 'permissive society' in which sexual mores are treated as each individual's purely private affair into which society may not without impertinence poke its inquisitive and censorious nose. Some parents speak with a genuine concern that formal religious education should be sympathetically timetabled and treated with respect as a discipline, and above all that the whole life or 'ethos' of the school should reflect those Christian values that the parents are seeking to foster at home.<sup>33</sup>

A letter written by one parent to the head of St. Bede's in 1980 contained a passage which crystallised the attitude in direct terms:

'We need a school where our children can receive a total education. We ask for them more than training in academic, social and physical knowledge and skills (though we demand the highest standards in these as well); we require a school environment where Christian values are upheld, where the moral and spiritual lives of children are not only acknowledged, but nurtured and developed, where by constant example they can grow up as part of a caring community. We do not believe that 'religious education lessons' provide all our children need in the way of religious education, but that the latter goes on all the time, at home and at school, in every subject on the curriculum, in the corridors and in the dining hall. We want teachers who are not afraid to take a stand and speak out against society's evils, prejudice, materialism, intolerance, racism, whatever they may be'.

In a Memorandum on 'Christian Schooling' of January 1974 the Roman Catholic Ecumenical Commission for England and Wales wrote as follows:

'The whole life of a school is part of the educational process, and the

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<sup>33</sup>Similar views are discussed in Cardinal Hume's speech to the first National Conference on Catholic Education (July 1992) and in A Shared Vision: Education in Church Schools by David Lankshear (Schools Officer of the Church of England Board of Education), National Society, 1992, p.25.



Christian must value the educative effect of a community atmosphere that springs from Christian commitment, difficult though this ethos may be to define in set terms'.

The practical is in what ways can Christian faith and practice be discerned to be constitutive of the prevalent tone, atmosphere, and assumptions of the community in a Church school. In a paper produced by the Roman Catholic Ecumenical Commission's Working Party on Joint Schools in 1978,

Mgr. Kevin Nichols wrote:

'Christian values have to be translated into the school's community life. They should affect - indeed create - its ethos or atmosphere: that reality which is hard to put a finger on, but which is of such great importance. A school, like any other community is a network of human relationships. The quality of those relationships as a whole is a major factor in building a school's ethos'.

The Anglican diocese of Southwark in 1983 also endeavoured to formulate what it understood by the ethos of a Church school:

'In a school, ethos is created and influenced by factors from both within and without the school community. As these factors are in a state of movement, it follows that the ethos of a school must itself be dynamic and therefore open to review and appraisal ... Attempts to restrict the nature of ethos by hard and fast rules can curtail the evolutionary process of this very elusive and yet fundamental concept...

'Through its legal right to appoint staff, select Governors, control RE, and in the secondary school to be responsible for the whole curriculum, it (i.e. the Church) may create an institution in which the Christian faith is manifest through every aspect of the school's individual and corporate life.'

Anglican and Roman Catholic educationists agree that the ethos of a Church school was critical to its Christian success. For an ecumenical school this ethos is required to reflect the richness of both traditions, yet encourage mutual respect and understanding? How well was this achieved in the early years of St. Bede's?

The headteacher, Phil Dineen, herself 'absolutely committed to ecumenism', realised that the school's key appointments had to be equally committed. It was not only members of senior management or the head of RE, but also the school secretary whose communication skills and use of the 'right terminology' in responding to enquiries were critical to good community relations. Reassuring local clergy, Catholics apprehensive that Catholic education was being diluted, Anglicans fearful of catechetical indoctrination, took considerable time and effort. Dineen explained her dilemma:

'Different Christian denominations use language which is culturally distinctive. I found that my efforts to use inclusive Christian terminology, which avoided offence to either party, would upset traditional Catholics who looked for familiar language and symbols to reassure them that St. Bede's had the ethos of a Catholic school. Far from being obstructive, their real fears resulted from ignorance of Anglicanism. Anglicans too were watching us but were generally less defensive'.<sup>34</sup> (personal interview January 1993)

By contrast, staff found the Christian ethos of an ecumenical school more rather than less explicit. Dineen felt that some not particularly committed Roman Catholics, who might have been used to remaining on the sidelines in a Catholic school, could not do so in a joint school where the Christian ethos was under the spotlight. Ironically, more attention might have been paid to RE and Roman Catholic teaching at St. Bede's than in some Catholic schools, she suggested.

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<sup>34</sup> The researcher found similar challenges, for example in devising a common questionnaire for the second year pupils' parish day in 1980: the position of altar/holy table; role of priest/minister; mass/eucharist/ holy communion. Used to a broader range of terminology within their own tradition, most Anglicans seemed less apprehensive; however the Evangelicals like the Roman Catholics were more sensitive.

One Roman Catholic teacher, new to the joint school in 1981, said, 'It must be good for Catholics to work alongside other Christians - it must be a more realistic environment than a straight RC Church school.' An Anglican teacher, speaking from experience of working in the Catholic school involved in the merger, thought that the Roman Catholics might have lost part of their distinctive tradition of devotion in the amalgamation, e.g. the distinctive habits of nuns, crucifixes and statutes of saints adorning the building, the sign of the cross at Assembly, but that in compensation the Roman Catholics seemed now to have emerged from a previously rather narrow environment.

Even if some staff interviewed in 1981 thought the ecumenical influence on the pupils generally might not be that noticeable in terms of their behaviour, one science teacher commented that the ecumenical atmosphere helped pupils to appreciate both sides of a question more easily. Assemblies and services were singled out by staff as a reflection of the Church school ethos.

Another teacher remarked:

'Being able to attend religious services with teachers and pupils and having assemblies where religion is an integral part, have some influence on your thinking and attitudes or behaviour in the school. Having chaplains present and pupils whom you see and relate to in the parish also affects you'.

In response to the question whether staff were made aware that some pupils were committed Christians, a biology teacher added: 'An altar boy in most classes would be able to explain how a poppy seed is dispersed by a 'censor mechanism'.

Several staff, particularly in the humanities subjects, commented that religious and moral issues often arose in their lessons, e.g. the Reformation's

place in history, social issues reflected in English literature. In modern languages, particularly at the Sixth Form level, a teacher commented, 'Christians have responded well to Mauriac, but have been hindered by preconceptions in studying Sartre'. In physical education, issues such as honesty, loyalty to team members, no foul play or cheating, were singled out for special emphasis. In science the teaching on contraception, abortion, population control, respect for plant and animal life and for one's own body, were all considered topics raising religious and moral questions. A Roman Catholic science teacher remarked:

'You are aware you have to give both sides of the picture, an Anglican and a Roman Catholic perspective, and encourage students to think through the issues for themselves.'

It is clear that many teachers at St. Bede's made a conscious effort in their lessons to discuss moral and religious issues in a Christian context. Several form tutors in 1981 said that they encouraged such discussion in form periods (eg. on issues such as bullying or stealing) and that senior pupils often wished to compare viewpoints on contemporary events in the news.

In relation to counselling, staff were asked to what extent they were aware of their pupils' religious views or backgrounds. Replies varied. On the one hand there was the answer, 'I make a point of finding out at the beginning of the year', or 'I feel advice would be pointless unless you know the student's background and beliefs'; on the other hand, 'I make a principle of not asking', and 'I have not found this makes much difference'. While some suggested that they were not as aware as they should be, one teacher added, 'I would particularly want to be aware of their religious background if asked about contraceptive advice.' Another said, 'Denominational issues only arise

if I need to ask which chaplain the child would like to talk to.'

In conclusion, it is clear that both the overt and the hidden curriculum were influenced by the Church school context, though it would be difficult to quantify this influence. While a joint Church school might reflect a wider range of viewpoints than a single-denominational establishment, the issues for discussion were similar. It might be the case that the pupils at St. Bede's were unable to see their environment as anything other than normal compulsory education; they were not comparing it with other ways of doing things. But, as one teacher suggested, 'it would be most interesting to see whether those children are taking an active part in ecumenical activity within the community, ten, twenty, or thirty years from now'.

## 2. ST. BEDE'S SCHOOL: Ten Years On 1991-92

### a) **New Developments in Ecumenism**

'We have got to get the theology right first: what is God's will for the Christian Churches and then where does St Bede's fit in?' (personal interview 1992)

These words of Mr Julian Marcus, the Anglican headteacher appointed in 1985 to succeed Dr Dineen, are reminiscent of the original Manifesto of 1972 which, at a time when ecumenical hopes were running high after the Anglican/Roman Catholic Commission's eucharistic agreement, envisaged a united Christian school blazing a trail for ecumenical collaboration at the parish and lay level. He continued:

'It is important to make ecumenical schools a microcosm of what the Churches are doing ecumenically. This means that St. Bede's needs to take seriously the role of the Free Churches in the ecumenical movement and rethink its constitution to reflect Churches Together in England.'

Ten years after the writer's period as head of department, St. Bede's exuded confidence in, its own success. The school had expanded its staff and pupil roll under its new headteacher and had become increasingly oversubscribed.<sup>35</sup> New buildings had been opened in September 1988 and dedicated in March 1990<sup>36</sup> by the Anglican and Roman Catholic diocesan bishops, and the school was anticipating the arrival of 11 year olds in September 1993, when the age of secondary transfer was to be lowered from

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<sup>35</sup>Between 1985 and 1990, Sixth form numbers rose by around 61%. In 1991 300 applications were received for 226 places. This problem was exacerbated in 1992-93 when, to accommodate the year 7 group for the first time, the annual intake was reduced to 210.

<sup>36</sup>Achieved only after a debate in Parliament, a petition to No.10 Downing Street (9 July 1986), and a meeting with two Secretaries of State. Sir Keith Joseph expressed surprise when he met the governors' delegation: it was the first time he found both an Anglican and a Catholic bishop supporting the same school!

12+ to 11+ across the county. Like most schools, St. Bede's was coping with financial constraints<sup>37</sup> (under Local Management of Schools) and reviewing its position in relation to grant-maintained status. In May 1992 the governors decided not to seek GMS for the immediate future, considering the imminence of 11+ transfer and the need to lease extra accommodation from the LEA.

The issue of the Free Churches' involvement in St. Bede's became part of the governors' agenda during 1991-1992. The implications for pupil admissions, financial contributions, religious education, chaplaincy and community relations, were significant. Although in practice under former heads at both Bishop Simpson and St. Bede's, Free Church children had always been welcomed in reasonable numbers, there had been 'a modest but steady rise' in Free Church applicants, averaging 12-13% and, in 1991, even amounting to 17% of the intake. The governors, in monitoring the admissions balance over the years, had not seen this as an issue for comment, other than to question whether the Free Churches should contribute to the school's maintenance costs (a question also asked of some local Anglican Churches: Anglican deanery policy was that each parish should demonstrate its responsibility to the Christian community by basing its contribution on parishioner numbers rather than on the number of children attending St Bede's; not all parishes regularly fulfilled their obligation). No trust deed for St. Bede's had specified formal arrangements on admissions or staffing, which were rather by less formal agreement and tradition, allowing for

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<sup>37</sup>In 1991-92 it faced a 2 1/2% cut in real terms, as did other Surrey schools. However, its per capita funding was the third lowest in the LEA, creating major anxieties about staffing and resources (Staff Development Plan 1991)

greater flexibility in changing circumstances.

In practice, therefore, the rise in Free Church pupil admissions coinciding with greater oversubscription to the school generally, had meant that 'fringe Anglicans and other religions' had usually increasingly been excluded. The proportion of Roman Catholics meanwhile had remained steady between 25-32%, averaging about 28%. The head acknowledged the danger that St. Bede's could be accused of being a Christian middle-class ghetto in which 'Christians kept the best school to themselves', a view he considered detrimental to good community relations. This perception was reinforced when the local imam was unable to gain admission for his child in 1991. The table below gives some indication of the changing admissions pattern over ten years:

| <u>Denomination</u> | <b>1982</b>           |                | <b>1992</b>           |                |
|---------------------|-----------------------|----------------|-----------------------|----------------|
|                     | <u>Whole School %</u> | <u>Year 8%</u> | <u>Whole School %</u> | <u>Year 8%</u> |
| Anglican            | 63.2                  | 70.5           | 51.7                  | 44.5           |
| Roman Catholic      | 28.4                  | 20.5           | 28.6                  | 38.1           |
| Methodist           | 3.1                   | 3.6            | 4.2                   | 4.7            |
| Baptist             | 1.9                   | 0              | 4.4                   | 4.7            |
| United Reformed     | 2.0                   | 1.3            | 3.2                   | 4.2            |
| Other Free          | 0.1                   | 0.5            | 5.9                   | 3.4            |
| Salvation Army      | 0.3                   | 1.3            | 0.1                   | 0.4            |
| Other/None          | 1.0                   | 2.3            | 1.9                   | 0              |
| Total no. of pupils | 1075                  | 224            | 1186                  | 236            |



In September 1990, the national ecclesiastical bodies came together to form Churches Together in England, the successor to the British Council of Churches; but this time the Roman Catholics were included as full members (in accordance with a recommendation from the National Pastoral Congress in Liverpool, 1980). Although St. Bede's had to all intents and purposes seen itself as a recognised 'Local Ecumenical Project' LEP, even to the point of including that logo unofficially in its publications, no formal covenant had ever been drawn up. The rather narrow criterion for LEP recognition under the Churches' Council for Local Ecumenical Projects in England meant that the governors' request in the early 1980s had been turned down since it was not associated with a formally constituted Free Church Federal Council. When the criteria were widened in the mid 1980s under Derek Palmer, then General Secretary to the Anglican Board for Mission and Unity, so as to include schools, St Bede's Redhill was added to the database at the request of the then chair of governors, although no sponsoring body was specified. The headteacher, however, considered the absence of a local Free Church Federal Council in Redhill to be solvable, a view expressed in a letter to the ecumenical Moderator of 16 July 1990.

On the Roman Catholic side, meanwhile, the appointment in 1983 of a 'conservative' Catholic as local parish priest, whose prime interest was to safeguard (more perhaps than to share) the Catholic tradition and to assert the rights of his parishioners to send their children to their Catholic school,<sup>38</sup> had created some problems for new ecumenical developments.

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<sup>38</sup>His priority was to build his new Catholic Church and Middle School. Julian Marcus described him as 'supportive in all crises and difficulties' but opposed to any plans for an ecumenical Middle school.

'Manpower difficulties' in the diocese were said to explain the appointment, and a few years passed before the bishop could find an appropriate replacement, to accord more closely with local lay Catholic feeling. There were objections to St. Bede's celebrating 'parallel' eucharists which moved the bishop - also under some pressure from very conservative Catholics - to request that they cease in 1985 after Julian Marcus' appointment as headteacher<sup>39</sup>. Even if not disallowed by the 1983 code of canon law, they had been leading to misunderstanding in the parishes as they 'were not part of the local ecumenical experience', commented the bishop (Church Times 22 January 1993). A Roman Catholic member of staff in the R.E. department reflected that the parish priest 'thought he was being ecumenical, but felt he had to fly the flag for the Roman Catholics: the new one is much more ecumenically minded and supportive' (personal interview, June 1992).

Undeterred by such difficulties and inspired by the imminent establishment of Churches Together in England, following on the Swanwick Declaration of 4 September 1987 that 'as a matter of policy at all levels and in all places, our Churches must move from cooperation to clear commitment to each other in search of the unity for which Christ prayed', the headteacher published a paper in May 1990, entitled 'The Next Step.' Marcus argued that

'if St Bede's is to be faithful to the will of our Lord, to be true to the ecumenical inspiration of Vatican II, to participate in the mission of the Church through the Inter-Church process, to demonstrate as an LEP genuine 'commitment' as 'official policy at every level', then the

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<sup>39</sup>Phil Dineen, the previous head (interviewed in January 1993), suggested that the Bishop could not have stopped them earlier as she would have considered this a resignation issue.

Free Churches must be offered representation on the foundation.’<sup>40</sup>

He proposed that, while the school's instruments of government were being amended, it would be appropriate to invite Free Church representatives as observers to governors' meetings, and to request a 15% financial contribution to the school's maintenance costs in line with the average percentage of Free Church pupil admissions.

The headteacher's paper was discussed by the governors' Christian Education sub-committee, chaired by a local Anglican parish priest who decided properly enough to consult both the Anglican and Roman Catholic bishops:

‘My committee feels that before we go much further in our informal cooperation (let alone considering the thorny problem that might be involved in any possible inclusion of the Free Churches in the formal processes of the Foundation), we should share with you the Head's discussion paper and ask for your advice’ (letter of 18 June 1991).

He sought the bishops' approval for the use of Free Church ministers informally in denominational religious education and pastoral care for Free Church pupils; their views on allowing these ministers to assist all pupils in understanding each other's denominational background; and thirdly their advice on the development of St. Bede's as an official LEP.

The discussion paper caused consternation in both diocesan circles. The Southwark (Anglican) diocesan director expressed his deep concern (memorandum of 4 July 1991 and personal interview in March 1992) that the proposals would ‘rock the boat’, and in particular that the Roman Catholics might reconsider ‘their future involvement with the school if the

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<sup>40</sup>Encouraged by the Chairman of Governors, Julian Marcus saw his role as headteacher ‘was not just to be an educational manager but also to promote the school's ecumenical vision’ (personal letter from Mr. Marcus, January 1993).

present Trust was changed'. He argued that the head did not carry the full support of his governors, especially the Roman Catholics, whose diocese of Arundel and Brighton had 'continually and openly indicated their opposition'.

His anxieties were confirmed by a letter from the Roman Catholic area dean to his diocesan director of schools (8 November 1991) following the autumn governors' meeting, expressing fear that the diocesan involvement and therefore its authority were being eroded. The area dean voiced concern that the chairman of governors, although admitting the need for great sensitivity, believed that the governors had the 'legal right to alter the foundation', and only a 'moral obligation to take the views of the Trustees into account.' His letter sought Catholic diocesan advice on four main issues:

1. that the school was founded primarily to take the Anglican and Catholic children in the area, 'not because of a passionate desire to set up an Ecumenical School.<sup>41</sup> There is a difference between a Joint School and an Ecumenical School... Both dioceses still see the school as a Joint Foundation - nothing more.'
2. that the Foundation cannot be altered without the agreement of the Trustees of both dioceses.
3. that the presence of larger numbers of Free Church children does not imply corresponding representation. 'Representation surely hinges on the Foundation, not the other way round.'
4. that 'Free Church members are welcome provided there is room', but 'we are now reaching a position where baptized Catholics (and Anglicans) are excluded,' in spite of the bishop's statement that 'all baptized Catholics were entitled to Catholic education.'<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup>The original Manifesto actually envisaged a 'united Christian school' .

<sup>42</sup>This perception results from the fact that some Catholic parents with baptized children were no longer able, at the time of admission, to demonstrate their positive commitment to the Roman Catholic Church - that being the key admissions criterion for St. Bede's. The head commented, 'This was never faced at the time of the foundation; Christian congregations are unused to something Christian being so popular that not everyone who wants it can have it'.

These views clearly formulated Roman Catholic anxieties that agreement to official Free Church representation might water down the school's commitment to the Roman Catholics and Roman Catholic commitment to the school. It was but a single priest's view, but it was that of the person responsible for the consequences and represented an influential voice.

Other views were aired in a joint memorandum to their respective bishops agreed by the Anglican and Roman Catholic diocesan directors of Education in 1991. They shared the concern that any admissions policy by which Free Church children were admitted to St Bede's at the price of excluding Anglicans or Roman Catholics, must have emerged

'without the agreement of the parishes and diocesan authorities who financially and otherwise established and have sponsored the school.'

The Free Churches had traditionally felt their contribution to be in the non-denominational state-provided county sector<sup>43</sup>:

'if that traditional approach is no longer accepted Free Church policy, that must be clearly thought out and its implication spelt out for us all.'

While the informal involvement of Free Church ministers in St Bede's had been no problem,

'we are quite clear that the arrangements of St Bede's school should not be used for non-educational ecumenical engineering.'

The memorandum also clarified the diocesan directors' view of the vision and purpose of St Bede's:

'We still feel that there is something peculiarly valuable about the common trends in the ecclesiastical dimension which can bring Anglicans and Catholics very closely together. At St Bede's school, the sensitive approach to sacramental worship and Religious Education has protected and developed this crucial aspect. It has not been done

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<sup>43</sup>See Chapter II.

in any exclusive or narrow way. We feel confident that the contribution and importance of other denominations and non-Christian faiths have neither been neglected nor belittled. But such a tolerant and balanced approach need not, in our view, require a dismantling of the delicately established joint Anglican/Catholic basis to the school.'

The directors regretted that

'any advice which we offer can now, if desired, be interpreted as being negative to ecumenical developments or, specifically, hostile to the Free Churches.'

Nevertheless, they strongly advised their bishops:

- a) to affirm their support of the present joint Anglican/Catholic foundation to the school;
- b) to support the diocesan directors' concern that Anglican and Catholic children might not be offered places in the school as a consequence of places being given to non-Anglicans and non-Catholics.

A special meeting of the governing body was called on Saturday 1 February 1992 'to discuss in full the ecumenical role of the school', based on a draft document drawn up by the headteacher entitled 'An Ecumenical Covenant for St Bede's School': this noted the necessity of requesting the Secretary of State to alter the school's Instruments of Government in order to include Free Church foundation governors, and to change its name from a United School to St Bede's Ecumenical School.<sup>44</sup> Prior to the meeting, the Anglican diocesan director had written to all Southwark foundation governors, reiterating the main points made in the joint memorandum to the diocesan bishops. A parallel issue was emerging about whether power lay primarily with the dioceses or the governors.

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<sup>44</sup>Ironically 'ecumenical' was the original title proposed in the early 1970s, later amended to 'united'. This is attested in the archives of the diocesan lawyers. Legal advice in 1992 suggested that the Secretary of State would be unlikely to agree to the amendments of the foundation if the foundation governors and trustees were opposed.

The governors' meeting was later described by the chairman as 'helpful and productive'. Keen to assert their rights under the 1988 Education Reform Act, they unanimously resolved:

'it is the firm desire of the Governors of St. Bede's School for its foundation to be enlarged to include formal Free Church representation so that the school can reflect our membership of Churches Together in England'.

It was agreed that wider discussion be undertaken as to the provision of a Free Church chaplain for the school; that Free Church denominational RE be included in the curriculum from September 1992; and that the governors begin consultations with the bishops and diocesan authorities with a view to including Free Church representation in the foundation. These resolutions and consultations were reported to parents at the Annual Governors' Meeting on 2 April, when no parent asked any questions on this issue. Subsequently a joint meeting was held with both diocesan ecumenical officers on 7 July. Further meetings were planned with the two bishops for the autumn of 1992.

The question raised was bound to be a thorny one. On the one hand, the school saw the proposals for Free Church representation as a great ecumenical opportunity for St Bede's to become 'a dynamic force for ecumenism' in establishing a new kind of Local Ecumenical Project. By June 1992 "the Free Churches in Association with St Bede's" had been set up (in parallel to the Anglican deaneries structure) to appoint school governors and a chaplain, and to accept the moral commitment to pay expenses. The Chairman of the local Free Church Ministers' Fraternal wrote to his colleagues in November 1992: St Bede's 'offers a point where we can overcome our denominational and theological differences in a common concern for children's education and well-being'. Meanwhile, however, the response from both bishops had been

discouraging. They referred the issue back to their diocesan directors, insisting that it was 'largely an educational matter'. The headteacher expressed impatience with the dioceses' preoccupation with ecclesiastical power and bureaucracy: to him the question was primarily theological, about 'the will of God' rather than about 'territory and power' (his words in a personal interview, July 1992). Nevertheless the diocesan directors urged caution, realising that amending the Trust deeds would be contentious (and therefore expensive), and that it would be easy to unsettle Roman Catholic confidence in the school, particularly in the matter of admissions, a view independently confirmed by two Roman Catholic governors.<sup>45</sup>

The chairman of governors, when interviewed in June 1992, acknowledged these concerns as sensitive and complex, and conceded the importance of 'pacing any new developments carefully'. However, the significance of the matter was illustrated by remarks of the pupils themselves. One Sixth Form girl, reflecting on her first impressions of St. Bede's at the age of 12, regretted that, as a Methodist, she was always put in with the Anglicans: 'the first message the school conveyed to me was that Methodists were not important' (interview 1992). A young boy, asked in the bus queue by a senior teacher on the pastoral team why he did not get a bus pass to Epsom, explained that, as a Methodist, he was not entitled to the free pass given to Anglicans and Roman Catholics; the boy behind him in the queue commented by the way of helpful explanation, 'you see, Miss, he's the wrong religion.'

At interviews in April and July 1992, staff also expressed a variety of views.

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<sup>45</sup>A teacher governor interviewed in April 1992 and a parent governor interviewed in June 1992



Members of the RE department considered that Free Church children had a higher profile than ten years previously. They were keen to have their own identity and proud of their tradition. The Roman Catholic chaplain, now a nun appointed in 1988, explained that she had learnt much about differences within the Free Churches since she came to St Bede's: 'The Methodists seem to be similar to us and the Baptists so different.' She was impressed by the Free Church children, e.g. in running their own prayer group: 'Their faith is so strong.' She understood the reservations of the Catholic diocese because St Bede's had so often been the focus of attention. But having seen integrated schools in Northern Ireland, like Lagan College, succeed in creating ecumenical schools which included the Free Churches, without the need of diocesan structures, she felt herself drawn to the head's vision for St. Bede's.

An evangelical Anglican senior colleague, however, felt hesitant about formal Free Church representation. She questioned whether it was really the role of the school to bring the Churches together. She felt that St Bede's first priority was to run a successful school with an academic and Christian ethos, thereby demonstrating to the Churches that different communions can work together: 'We don't need to become one Church because we are all one now, as part of the one body of Christ<sup>46</sup>; the school should demonstrate that unity.' Her reservations, which she admitted were practical rather than philosophical, included the risk of upsetting the dioceses who had invested so much in the joint school ('there are a lot of sensitivities'), the fact that not all Free Churches were affiliated to Churches Together in England (e.g. the independent Evangelicals), and the absence of a Free Church body to shoulder

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<sup>46</sup>1 Corinthians Ch.12.

its obligations to the school, though it was some reassurance to her that the new Association might turn out to be sufficient.

Two established members of staff, both high Anglicans, independently drew attention to a far from unimportant theological issue. As Anglicans they often found themselves identified as Protestants rather than as Catholics and therefore seen on the same 'side' as the Free Churches. However, in their theological position, they personally felt much closer to the Roman Catholics. This self-understanding was difficult to make comprehensible to the Evangelicals as well as to traditional Catholics conditioned to regard all Reformation churches as a rebellion against divine authority. The issue of Free Church representation was perhaps as much about personal perceptions, including self-perceptions, as it was about structures and constitutions.

## **b) The Curriculum and Religious Education**

### **i) The Curriculum**

Curriculum development in 1991-92 was understandably dominated by the National Curriculum and post-16 expansion. Like most Church schools, St Bede's had to manage both key stage 3 and 4 implementation and its implications for staffing, resources, and in-service training, as well as ensure that religious education retained its prime position as a core subject through to GCSE for all students. In the Sixth Form, expanding numbers of students staying on beyond compulsory school leaving age had necessitated the development of courses appropriate for a wider range of ability.<sup>47</sup> Students

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<sup>47</sup>In 1991, 21 different A level courses were offered, rising to 23 in 1992, together with 4 AS levels, GCSE (Mature) and Secretarial Studies. The City and Guilds Diploma in Vocational Education was introduced in September 1992.

from other 11-16 Surrey schools, faced with the option of college courses, were also free to transfer into St Bede's Sixth Form.<sup>48</sup>

In addition, the school was involved in the Technical and Vocational Education Extension scheme, (operating in Years 10 and 11 in September 1991) and in piloting Records of Achievement in Years 8 and 9 (the implications of DES circular 5/92 on School Reports were still to be assessed). St Bede's contributed more students than any other school in Surrey to the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, and extended its international exchanges (already established with Europe and New York) into Tanzania. Interestingly the head even considered such Third World links as 'the essence of what a Christian school is about; much more significant than the ecumenical question' (personal letter, January 1993).

A senior colleague considered that the school's academic reputation had grown over the decade: it was now more sought after by parents wanting high academic standards, with some still inclined to see it as 'the next best thing to private education.'

'We now offer three languages (Spanish was added in 1989) and science has blossomed. Students are awarded Oxbridge places each year. There's now a better boy/girl balance than ten years ago when it was still seen as the ex-girls' school.'

It was not surprising that St Bede's was ambitious to enhance its academic reputation both locally (having once been known as a 'secondary-modern')

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<sup>48</sup>One new Sixth Former (interviewed in July 1992) had been attracted by the school's reputation for 'good teachers who made you work'; he was also from a practising Anglican background.

and nationally, now that league tables were all part of marketing.<sup>49</sup> A parent governor commented in interview (June 1992) that the school had no choice in the current climate since parents were so critical about results; but she wondered whether it had swung too far the other way: 'I think St Bede's is excellent for able children, but I'm not so sure now about the less able. How can a Christian school keep the right balance?'

ii) Religious Education

Religious Education, as ten years previously, was seen as central to the curriculum. In the school's booklet entitled, 'Information for new parents', the section 'Religious Education in the classroom' extended across more than three pages - the only curriculum area to be considered in such depth. Major staffing difficulties experienced in the mid 1980s (including a two-year interregnum<sup>50</sup>) had been overcome, and the RE staff appeared confident and professional in their discussion of departmental issues. The 1992 H.M.I. inspection team invited into the department, commended it for 'sound scholarship and Christian commitment'. Designated RE classrooms in the new building had raised morale and put RE in a stronger position across the school. HMI described the department's resources and displays as 'excellent'. One teacher who had been attracted by 'the most exciting RE job in Britain', claimed that it had largely lived up to his initial impressions.

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<sup>49</sup>St Bede's was cited in The 1991 Parent's Guide to Good State Schools as one of the three hundred best schools in Britain and placed top in the Surrey section of the 1992 national GCSE league tables.

<sup>50</sup>The school had experienced some difficulty in making a satisfactory appointment as head of department in 1985. As a result, a long-serving member of the department became acting head of department for two years.

RE staff had felt it was important to be academically demanding, as standards throughout the school improved. They had switched to the more challenging LEAG GCSE syllabus<sup>51</sup> with encouraging results and increased A level take-up.<sup>52</sup> They had also changed to an interesting Cambridge modular course for A level, which allowed the flexibility of building up credits towards A or AS certificates over the two-year programme.

The next priority for the head of department (appointed in 1987) had been to bring the syllabuses up to date, which, despite the considerable efforts of colleagues in the meantime, had not in his view kept pace with contemporary developments. In 1991-2, for the general RE in Year 8, pupils studied an introductory course on Old and New Testament themes, followed by a topic on pilgrimage<sup>53</sup> to include aspects of Christian history. In Year 9, a course on three major world religions (Judaism, Hinduism, and Islam) was justified to parents with the observation: 'Unless students make a serious study of faiths other than their own, they cannot be said to be religiously educated'; they need to understand faiths encountered in society to avoid racial or cultural prejudice. Setted pupil groups were rearranged to facilitate mixed ability teaching throughout years 8-11 to obviate 'bottom set' labelling, but facing staff with additional demands to ensure appropriate differentiation and match to pupil capability.

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<sup>51</sup>A Catholic RE teacher suggested that the previous syllabus had been 'easier than the catechism'.

<sup>52</sup>A Lower sixth student commented, 'French A level gave me the ability to speak a language, but RE made me think'.

<sup>53</sup>This continued the successful tradition of pilgrimage in the steps of St Bede in the north-east of England during summer half-term, started in 1983.

The overall structure of religious education established in 1979 seemed to have held up well. The integration of denominational teaching with the GCSE syllabus on 'Christianity and Family Life' had continued with pupils 'willing to address denominational differences openly.'<sup>54</sup> Segregated denominational RE (DRE) in Years 8 and 9 continued, and continues, to be the subject of debate. The common syllabus framework (e.g. all pupils studying the sacrament of baptism simultaneously) and its main topics had been largely retained. At the staff restructuring in 1990, the teacher promoted to second-in-department had been given responsibility for the DRE joint scheme of work, and faced similar difficulties to those of 1979 in identifying appropriate teaching materials.<sup>55</sup> She produced a resources and suggestions pack after consultation with governors and colleagues, but was deeply discouraged when the official governors' meeting was inclined to dismiss it as merely 'photocopied material'. The timetabling of one double DRE period every fortnight<sup>56</sup> created a lack of continuity, but offered a reasonable length lesson for teachers to get to know their students. To encourage the children to distinguish 'general' from 'DRE', a new marking scheme of effort grades was introduced. The department also hoped to address the problem of pupil motivation on a non-examination course by reporting pupil progress in DRE through the new Records of Achievement.

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<sup>54</sup>When asked by the researcher whether the removal of segregated denominational RE in 1979 had been in retrospect thought advisable, a RE colleague replied 'I'd have shot you if you hadn't!'

<sup>55</sup>Some material from 'Weaving the Web' had been helpful, but staff felt their own syllabus was more strongly developed; the 'Web' had been well received by RE colleagues in the local Catholic schools, but St Bede's staff recognized the danger of 'humanistic mish-mash' (cf. chapter 4 above).

<sup>56</sup>The timetabler admitted that placing Year 9 DRE on alternative Friday afternoons, as in 1991/92, would not be repeated.

In a similar way to ten years ago, the staff felt bound to ask what was the continued justification of separate denominational teaching. A senior teacher acknowledged that the original 'tramlines to establish boundaries' were no longer needed since the school was now more confident and open in religious matters, but she admitted sensitivities still existed - 'nevertheless that is no reason not to keep asking the question.' Some RE staff found classroom management of DRE with Year 9 students very difficult; but they also admitted that it had to be retained for 'political reasons'. In 1992 the governors resisted a senior management proposal to remove it by September 1993 to allow more time for the National Curriculum.

A Roman Catholic in the department commented:

'Until the Roman Catholic Church gets its educational structure right, we'd have a fight to remove it; but progress has been made. The parish now takes responsibility for the teaching of the sacraments; the gaps to be bridged are between communion/confirmation and adult catechetics. I feel strongly that catechetics should be done in the parish and the home - it's the parents' job to teach the catechism' (personal interview, July 1992).

Such views appear to be supported by the educationists associated with the National Project for Religious Education in the Roman Catholic Church. The Catholic Chaplain agreed that

'we are doing a stop-gap in DRE until the parishes are ready. Although holy communion and confirmation preparation has already been taken out of the schools across the diocese, the school is still expected to do its part. The danger is that if catechetics are wholly removed from schools, will the Church see a need for Catholic schools at all? I personally think Church schools can be justified by communicating an effective Catholic ethos, since a 'religious' way of life is caught, not taught. The role of staff is critical here, in their relationships with pupils and their personal example. Parents will be looking for results in their children's morality and lifestyle.'

The Catholic Chaplain and staff felt under particular pressure from both

sides. The contemporary political climate promoting school distinctiveness and parental choice in education, as in the White Paper on 'Choice and Diversity', July 1992, together with more conservative Catholic circles lobbying for a return to a traditional catechism, encouraged parents to expect more from their school in terms of religious formation. At an open forum during Cardinal Hume's visit to St. Bede's in March 1992, one Catholic parent commented that she did not feel her children were receiving enough catechetics at school, the only time when there was a 'captive audience'. When a Roman Catholic RE teacher suggested that this was primarily the parish's responsibility, the parent replied that the parish was not teaching it either. The Cardinal expressed the hope that the school would take some responsibility with the parish for Christian nurture<sup>57</sup>. Several Catholic staff, interviewed in April and July 1992, recognised the value of the Cardinal's visit in marking the hierarchy's positive commitment to ecumenism, but felt frustrated that 'there had been no real discussion of Roman Catholicism in the ecumenical context.'

However, it would be misleading to suggest that the only perceived point of DRE was to keep Catholic parents happy. Catholic RE staff acknowledged that the community needed to be reassured by seeing Catholic teachers teaching Catholic children, but they did not see DRE as 'narrow catechetical nurturing, even if that's the way we are expected to see it.' The RE staff felt the real value of DRE lay in the teacher-pupil relationships and explicit Christian atmosphere of the classroom, where children felt more able to talk about their own personal exploration of faith than in general RE, and the

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<sup>57</sup>See also his speech to the 1st National Conference on Catholic Education, July 1992



chaplains could be present to answer their individual questions. Yet the possibility of tension is well illustrated by the following anecdote: one Catholic teacher said she greatly valued the opportunity for staff and pupils to be able to acknowledge their own shared community, for example, by saying a prayer together in class; however, she had found herself biting her lip when the Catholic chaplain tried to insist that the children learnt by rote part of the catechism, a task which she like others interviewed in single Catholic schools, considered to be the role of the home and parish.

It would be misleading, also, to imply that DRE was primarily for the benefit of the Roman Catholics. Anglican staff felt equally strongly that DRE had an important role in ensuring that both Anglicans and Catholics had an understanding of their own traditions within an ecumenical Church school. 'They need to realise that an ecumenical school is two traditions coming together' and 'to know the difference'. Both Anglican and Roman Catholic staff said they explained each other's distinctive denominational characteristics to their DRE classes. At the same time, the Anglicans recognised that most pupils interested to learn more about their own Churches in their denominational groups were likely to be attending their parish Sunday school and therefore to need less specific nurturing than the Roman Catholics whose Church teaching still tended to be based in school. Again they wanted to create an atmosphere in the classroom in which children felt confident to talk about their own religious perceptions and understanding.

Meanwhile, unplanned but significant, a new development in DRE had taken place since the autumn of 1991. It became apparent in timetabling for the 1991-92 academic year that the headteacher would be unable to fulfil his

teaching commitment to the Anglican DRE programme in Year 9. To cover the classes, a qualified teacher from the local United Reformed Church was brought in and the teaching groups restructured to place all Free Church pupils in one group and to make the Anglican classes viable. By accident, Free Church DRE had been established. This arrangement continued 'fortuitously' into 1922-93, informally creating a specific Free Church teaching presence in the school. As a senior teacher pointed out, the Free Church parents often needed as much reassurance as the Roman Catholics about entrusting their children to a joint Anglican/Roman Catholic school where they might not always expect to meet a favourable estimate of the Reformation.

While this development gave the Free Church pupils more self-confidence in their own identity, and strengthened the argument for some official Free Church representation on the governing body, the move also reinforced the separate denominational structure in the RE department. Since all Free Church children admitted to St Bede's (like most Anglicans) were likely to have been closely involved in their Church Sunday schools, the DRE classes were appropriate less for passing on knowledge than for providing an opportunity for pupils to explore their own faith in a sympathetic environment.

There is little doubt that, over the last ten years, the 'political' justifications outweighed the 'educational' considerations for continuing separate denominational teaching at lower secondary level. Maintaining the confidence of parents and Churches was of paramount importance, overriding the educational difficulties of limited resource materials or managing large classes of 14 year olds for non-examination courses once a fortnight. On the

other hand, the integration of denominational teaching into the GCSE syllabus in Years 10 and 11 had been successfully established, giving a sense of assurance that specific denominational issues could be addressed in an ecumenical context.<sup>58</sup>

RE staff, interviewed in 1992, looked optimistically towards the future: perhaps after the new Year 7 children had settled into St. Bede's, it might become possible to negotiate fully integrated RE for Year 9, whilst retaining DRE for Years 7 and 8. Although this move has so far been resisted by governors, staff shared the founders' hope expressed seventeen years earlier, that what can be done together in worship and RE 'will be allowed to increase and expand naturally as the staff feel it right'.

The broad principles of religious education at St. Bede's, as formally stated by the RE Department, make a suitable conclusion to this section :

'Religious Education must not seek merely to present factual information about religion. It must also encourage students to experience religion at first hand. Only then can children be led to make a realistic choice about their own religious views. This is a difficult aim to achieve by itself; rather it is part of an on-going process to which the worship of the school, faith of the home, and the teaching and practice of the Church all contribute.'

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<sup>58</sup>Roman Catholic Sixth formers, interviewed in July 1992, all acknowledged that it was important to have early grounding in denominational RE, but described DRE lessons as 'pathetic later on'. Both Anglican and Catholic students felt that this should be the Churches' role. However, they appreciated the value of understanding both denominational views in their GCSE course.

c) **School Chaplaincy and Ethos**

i) The Chaplaincy role, worship and community liaison

In February 1990, the governors advertised for a new Anglican chaplain with the following responsibilities, which may be read as the priorities identified over ten years' experience :

- a) to be a pastor and enabler to the whole school community involving home visiting, parish liaison.....
- b) to lead the Anglican and support the Free Church staff and students within the school, helping them to have a deeper sense of their vocation and responsibility; presiding at the Eucharist; leading other worship, developing lay leadership in the spiritual life of the school, encouraging and participating in diocesan activities.
- c) to lead and guide ecumenical services within the school.
- d) to lead discussion groups of students in the Second Year and Sixth Form weekly and help staff with denominational Religious Education lessons.
- e) to assist Health Education staff with Anglican perspectives on moral and ethical problems.

These tasks were expected to occupy three days per week in term-time; the chaplain would also assist as minister in a local Anglican parish and could be offered some part-time teaching (thereby receiving accommodation and additional remuneration). The new chaplain took up his post in September 1990, spending three days in the parish and three days in St. Bede's, with a third of the latter also as a part-time teacher in the RE department, marking an interesting new departure. Trained as a counsellor and with previous school chaplaincy experience, he believed he had established himself effectively in both pastoral and academic roles. He commented that working in the classroom enabled him to develop good relationships with pupils and to gain the respect of staffroom colleagues.

Interviewed in November 1992, he described how he was particularly attracted to the job because it offered teaching and he found no difficulty in the dual role of teacher and counsellor.

'I expect high standards academically but children talk to me confidentially as a priest: it's not a problem. I feel I'm just starting after two years in the post: I like to initiate new ideas and give them time to develop'.

When asked how he saw the relationship between the two chaplains, himself and the Roman Catholic sister, he thought that they complemented each other well: the sister seemed more effective with children than staff whereas he, as a trained teacher, felt at home in the staff room. 'She is more child-orientated, whereas I counsel teaching and non-teaching staff all round the school.' The Roman Catholic chaplain also felt that they worked well together: she particularly enjoyed the relaxed atmosphere when pupils spent lunchtimes in the chaplaincy room, while her Anglican counterpart met colleagues in the staff canteen. The head considered the balance of a man and woman in the chaplaincy 'a great blessing to the school'; although initially he had been concerned when the Roman Catholic bishop did not offer a priest, in practice the sister had enhanced the confidence of local Catholic parish clergy in the school by inviting them in to celebrate the eucharist.<sup>59</sup>

Other staff interviewed in 1992 saw the chaplains' pastoral role as a valued complement to their own.<sup>60</sup> Sometimes year heads might refer a child for

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<sup>59</sup>cf. Tablet 15 February 1986: 'Chaplaincies should be seen not as threatening the parish but as valuable allies' (Chair of National Association of School Chaplains).

<sup>60</sup> The only occasion when criticisms of chaplains were voiced by staff in interview, both in 1982 and 1992, was, understandably, when services ran over schedule, causing disruption to lessons.

chaplaincy support; on other occasions, the chaplain would alert pastoral colleagues to a family crisis or bereavement. The governors' published policy on Health and Sex Education, as required under the 1986 Education Act, informed parents that

'students' conversations with chaplains are always regarded as confidential, although parental involvement will follow where necessary in almost all cases' (p. 4).

Turning to the issue of **worship**, the best organization was dependent on establishing effective relationships with the pupils. By 1988 when the Roman Catholic sister arrived, Roman Catholic clergy were unhappy with the pupils' voluntary mass arrangements, which had reverted to the time prior to the start of the school day in the chaplain's room, at 8.20 a.m. before most of the school buses had arrived. Few children were attending, and the services were rushed to beat the registration bell. The previous chaplain had been unable to drum up support even on days of obligation. The head therefore agreed with the sister's suggestion to move the Roman Catholic weekly eucharists back into assembly time on Tuesdays, an arrangement soon followed by the Anglicans on Wednesdays. When for pragmatic reasons it was later felt that both services should take place on Tuesdays, the two chaplains amicably agreed to hold their respective eucharists in alternate weeks. They could not have anticipated the result: so many pupils chose to attend both Anglican and Roman Catholic services each week that they had to transfer to a larger space in the gym, and its unsuitability has led to the consideration of building a chapel. Since both chaplains related well to each other and to the pupils, they created what one form tutor described in interview (June 1992) as a

'lovely atmosphere where everyone feels welcome.... I am particularly surprised at some of the 'lads' who go. They would not

have gone to the chaplain's room - it was too intimate - but now they will ask you openly, in front of their peers, if it's Eucharist today'.

As in all eucharistic services, the pupils were encouraged to receive communion if the priest of their own denomination was celebrating (and they were regular communicants) or to receive an individual blessing.

The voluntary services for the entire school, usually held twice a term, were also well attended in 1991-92, attracting large numbers of lower school children and up to 50% and 40% of year 10 and 11 students respectively.

One senior teacher reflected:

'Worship has really taken off in the last four years. We cram so many children in, I am sometimes even worried about Health and Safety, but I prefer that to what went before.'

Several staff commented on the atmosphere of unity and Christian fellowship in these joint services, which until 1989 had been denominationally separate, one year head recalling 'the feeling of them and us' when he had first come in 1987 - 'the school was not trying hard enough then.' Another wondered if the services might be better mandatory: 'Older students are often reluctant to go because it is crowded; or is that adolescent inertia?' One particular incident showed how much progress had been made ecumenically. Soon after her appointment and unaware of Protestant sensitivities in this area, the Catholic chaplain enthusiastically encouraged the children to join in saying the 'Hail Mary' at a joint service; it would not have occurred to her that there could be anxiety about an acclamation made up of two sentences of holy scripture. One Anglican RE teacher remarked:

'The Anglicans would probably have said it if they had known the words! It marked a turning-point for the school because Anglicans earlier on would certainly have taken offence. At least the GCSE course now covers these differences' (interview in July 1992).

It was common practice to make at least one of the termly joint services a eucharistic celebration, following either the Anglican or the Roman Catholic rite. On Ash Wednesday 1992, all pupils were able to receive the imposition of ashes on the forehead, whereas in 1982 the Catholic children came out of their separate service trying to brush off the ash so that they did not appear different from their peers. The chaplains actively encouraged pupil attendance and staff willingly participated: one Roman Catholic teacher explained how, supported by their sympathetic local priest, she had overcome her personal lack of confidence to assist in giving a blessing to the children who did not receive communion.

By 1992 each end of term was marked by a special service for staff, at which colleagues who were leaving selected their own hymns or readings, regardless of whether they themselves were practising Christians. One teacher saw this as indicative of a 'sense of common purpose among staff and a commitment that all individuals were valued in the school's Christian community.'

The parallel eucharists that had provided such important ecumenical opportunities in 1981-82 were no longer celebrated after 1985 when, as noted above, the bishop decided to withdraw his support for these services. Several staff and parents, including Roman Catholics, expressed regret in interviews in 1992 commenting that they had been a valuable witness to Christian fellowship. One Catholic parent reflected that shared communion 'would be good, but it seems to be an issue which is bigger than us. The children can't understand why not'. A St. Bede's student of 1982 (who went on to Cambridge to read theology) recalled the experience even in 1992 as one of the most powerful and exciting in her time at school. At the memorial



service held for Canon John Montague, the first chairman of governors, in November 1992, Julian Marcus reflected that it was 'John's greatest grief' that the Roman Catholic bishop stopped these services. One RE teacher also recalled 'they were one of the best things St. Bede's ever did.' The resentment among Anglicans and Roman Catholics was still deeply felt even seven years after these services had ceased. The previous headteacher, Phil Dineen thought the decision had seriously set back ecumenism in the local area. As more local ecumenical developments take root in England and other official ecumenical bodies evolve, this issue of parallel eucharists which maintain the current rules on intercommunion needs to be addressed.

In the decade since 1981-2, the chaplain's task of **community liaison** had hardly become less onerous. The 1992 prospectus recorded:

'Our students come from about 80 local parishes and churches. Liaison with these is a formidable but rewarding undertaking...The School chaplains often make home and Church visits where they can offer support and liaise also with parish priests and ministers.'

The chaplains continued to work within the parish communities, the Anglican priest having specific parochial responsibility as assistant minister. Both preferred the local parish work to involvement in official diocesan or deanery activities. The organisation of the annual Parish Day for year 8 pupils (previously second years) reinforced the chaplains' commitment to the community, linking school with home and parish and facilitating further ecumenical cooperation between local Churches.

The possibility of broadening the chaplaincy team in 1993 by the appointment of a Free Church chaplain added another dimension, and affected the balance established (sometimes precariously) over the last few years.

There has always been a latent question of churchmanship, particularly among Anglicans; the current chaplain is High Anglican, his predecessor was Low Church Evangelical. But the situation is more complicated if one Free Church chaplain is expected to represent the interests of both Methodists on the one hand and 'house' Churches on the other. The head of RE felt that, although there was a risk of Free Church 'in-fighting', he was hopeful that because the Anglican/Roman Catholic balance had worked so well, even at a time when the local Anglican parish was deeply Evangelical and the local Roman Catholic parish traditionally Irish and conservative, the Free Church chaplain should be able to fit easily into the team.

Over ten years, the chaplaincy role at St Bede's has evolved considerably. The pattern of worship has been developed, community links enhanced and relationships with staff and pupils strengthened. But in the final analysis, it was the quality of the chaplain's ecumenical vision as well as personal commitment which seemed most significant. In 1992 the Roman Catholic chaplain reflected:

'I'll never be the same again. Living through the fruitful tensions and consequences of being truly ecumenical means that you've got to take your theological vision beyond just being nice to non-Catholics. The prophetic role is not a comfortable one. I make mistakes. But when I talk to Catholic chaplains in other schools, I am certain that St Bede's is really trying to live out what it means to be a Christian school.'

ii) School ethos: shared Christian values

It is interesting to review the way in which St. Bede's saw its Christian ethos ten years on in 1991-92. The school governors remain explicit in their endorsement of the school's aspiration to a Christian ethos. For example, the 1992 prospectus specified the first aim of the school as follows:

'To provide for students and staff a Christian setting in which to experience the Gospel, to grow, explore, and nourish their faith (lived out at home, at church and in the world), to treasure and indeed test the traditions of their own denominations, while learning to work for the unity of the Christian Church; and in which to be helped to gain respect for other people who may have different likes, attitudes, and characteristics, or who may be of other races, cultures, and religions.'

The annual Governors' Report to Parents of April 1992 also emphasised this:

'We hope that concern for our Christian witness underpins all that we do'.

The report went on to instance school worship, community service, charity fundraising and Third World links as areas for practical expression of that witness.

The school's two leaflets for prospective parents and staff devoted a full section to 'The Religious Life of the School.'

'As St. Bede's is a Christian school, religion obviously has more importance than it would have in a county school. However, our aim is not to indoctrinate but to join pupils in a religious quest that asks fundamental questions about the meaning of human life and about our individual and social values... For staff and pupils who are committed Christians, there are frequent opportunities to explore faith and celebrate in worship our corporate life. Although not all our teachers belong to a Church, we hope that all will value a Christian way of life and share our concern to provide an exciting and relevant curriculum, within a caring pastoral framework which nurtures the individual and his/her growing intellect, beliefs, ideals, and emotions.'

This extract was common to both leaflets, for parents and for staff. However, that for parents also included the sentence:

'As a Christian school we are able to take committed stances upholding Christian values, for example in personal sexual behaviour.'

That for staff included the comment:

‘In practice, colleagues who are committed people but not churchgoers seem to fit happily into St Bede’s and its ambience and certainly do not feel pressurised!’

The importance of pragmatic marketing had not been missed by the management.

Self-evidently the teaching staff had a significant influence in their commitment to and understanding of the nature and ethos of an ecumenical Church school. We have seen in the previous section the way in which the chaplains were responsible for setting the tone in Christian relationships both within and outside the school community. Some indication of how the teachers saw their school was gained through personal interviews in 1991-92. There had been normal staff turnover, but colleagues’ views had changed little since similar interviews in 1981-82.

Several commented that the school had a higher proportion of committed caring staff than a county school and that there appeared ‘less gossip and intrigue’, ‘less militancy’ in the staff room<sup>61</sup>. One member of the staff replied ‘I cannot really put it into words; it’s just a feeling I get that the atmosphere is more caring.’ The presence of the chaplains also prompted a comment from a probationary teacher: ‘Some pupils make use of the opportunity to discuss problems with the chaplains, which relieves the pressure on staff.’ The staff room was seen as ‘by and large united’; despite the extra pressures of educational initiatives in recent years, colleagues still seemed willing to be involved in all aspects of the school. Admittedly one

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<sup>61</sup>Independently a similar comment emerged at Lagan College.

regretted that some of the new graduates coming into the profession appeared to be 'more out for themselves than for the kids'. One deputy head felt the general spirit of the school had improved over the years, helped by the new buildings and the more motivated pupil intake:

'The atmosphere is one of cooperation and care. You rarely hear a teacher shouting. The children are not tightly disciplined because they do not need to be. Exclusions are very exceptional.'

Another senior colleague added that the pressure to improve academic achievement had in no way lessened the school's Christian ethos.

A number of staff had chosen to apply to St. Bede's because of its ecumenical dimension. One senior Roman Catholic teacher, with experience in Catholic and county schools, felt the joint school was theologically and educationally more balanced than Catholic schools without an ecumenical presence. He valued the opportunities offered to staff and students to exchange religious ideas, improve their understanding and overcome prejudices - those atavistic memories which do much to keep groups apart.

'Even if the younger children do not notice it is ecumenical, they know it is Christian in ethos. Because they have no point of comparison, they do not know the significance of ecumenism, but the older ones can understand it. It could have a real influence on them later in life, even if they do not attend Church.'

Another colleague argued that he was 'more of a Catholic' because he knew more about Anglicans: he had witnessed a militant Protestant demonstration outside an ecumenical service in Liverpool Cathedral in 1967, and wanted to work to get rid of that kind of hatred.

'Celebrating and cherishing the differences is important rather than challenging them in a confrontational way; but you cannot be a Catholic in today's world without the ecumenical dimension.'

Staff also commented in respect of their pastoral responsibility. In the programme of Personal and Social Education<sup>62</sup>, taught by all form tutors to their own tutor groups, moral issues were bound to arise. A senior curriculum specialist emphasised that, while details may be different, the key thing was common agreement on the Christian principles underpinning moral values. After all it would be misleading 'to suggest that all Anglicans believe this or all Catholics believe that.' In 1992, one head of year felt able to say that, in his experience the children related well to each other, whether Protestant or Catholic:

'I have heard children on occasion use racist remarks or be inhumane in other ways, but never criticise another's religion'.

If back in 1982, there had been some concern that the outward signs of a Catholic school (e.g. crucifixes and statues, nuns in habits) might be lost in the joint school, by 1992 every classroom displayed (after consultation) a simple wooden cross, handmade by the technology staff at the request of the head when the new building opened in 1990. One teacher pointed out,

'We are more relaxed now; the new form rooms have display space where children can put up crosses, icons, crucifixes, or pictures as they like. One pupil on a school trip to Israel asked if she could buy an icon specially for her classroom wall.'

A local Anglican priest and school governor commented, 'It wouldn't work to import an artificial Anglican or Roman Catholic atmosphere into the school.'

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<sup>62</sup>The governors' 1989 statement of policy on Personal, Social, Health and Sex Education states, on contraception 'the Roman Catholic position is made quite clear that while in the last resort this is a matter for the conscience of individual Catholics, only the "safe period" is approved by the Church,' and on abortion, that all Churches 'start from a belief that human life is God-given and therefore sacred...Staff need to be aware that a very tiny minority of older girls may at some time have had an abortion, and that this experience often carries much emotional scarring.'

It might be feared that St Bede's was in danger of becoming a Christian 'hot-house'. In 1992, however, a senior teacher (an Anglican Evangelical) thought this was appropriately counteracted by the highly professional chaplaincy and, secondly, by the fact that even in the evangelical Christian Union, the children meet others with different views, and the Union was seen as open to anyone who valued Christian fellowship.

'I do not know whether the children there are Anglican or Catholic. Usually the pupils lead the sessions, but even the Catholic chaplain has been known to ask kids to give their personal testimony.'

One head of year commented wryly:

'There's no proselytising here; we are not breeding zealots.'

Another made the point that

'the issue is not whether you are an Anglican or a Catholic; it is more whether you are a believer. Although there is some normal peer group pressure not to take part, those who want to be involved in Christian activities are not treated differently; it is accepted as normal. One boy recently described his visits to an elderly lady for his Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme as 'part of Christian life'; and the Sixth Formers being interviewed for the post of Senior Student talked about their Christian activities openly and without embarrassment.'

Confident but not arrogant in their Christian beliefs and way of life, these young people seem to exemplify the achievement of St. Bede's in balancing personal commitment with ecumenical understanding.

## 5. Looking to the future

'The school is successful in many ways, it is popular and has a clear notion of its identity and place in the local and wider community. High standards are set and mostly achieved; examination results are good. However, there are aspects of the school which need to be addressed in order to ensure that all pupils are challenged both academically and personally, that staff can adapt to curricular change and development and the school can build on its present success' (HMI Report, March 1992).

St. Bede's has come a long way since it opened its doors in 1976. Despite a difficult amalgamation, inheriting outdated triple-site accommodation, an uneconomical Sixth Form and an ex-secondary-modern curriculum, the school has now established itself as a thriving and successful educational Christian community. When schools are suffering 'innovation fatigue' with the implementation of the National Curriculum and financial Local Management, the parental demands of middle-class suburbia, exacerbated by published league tables and issues such as selection by pupil ability or aptitude, encourage oversubscribed schools to 'rest on their laurels'. The increasing emphasis on awareness of Third World issues across the curriculum<sup>63</sup> might be sufficient challenge for generally affluent Surrey children. One member of staff commented: 'Perhaps St. Bede's might prefer not to take too many risks'.

To be recognised as a 'quality' school with a reputation for academic excellence and a caring ethos is one achievement, but to what extent is St. Bede's able to give a lead in ecumenical education? One Roman Catholic on the pastoral staff in 1992 thought that the school was still at a developing and evaluating stage and questioned whether it ought not to be doing more to

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<sup>63</sup>As exemplified by St. Bede's important link with Shambalai Secondary School, Lushoto, Tanzania.



advertise its pioneering ecumenism: was it reluctant to attract too much attention for external 'political' reasons? The move to incorporate formally the Free Churches into the foundation is indeed courageous if it can retain the confidence of the Anglican and Roman Catholic communities in the process.

How far can an ecumenical school celebrate the diversity of Christian traditions and at the same time advocate full cooperation in unity? If this is difficult for mature adults, how much more so for young people at school? To what extent should pupils' attention be drawn to denominational distinctions? Explicit clarification of different interpretations of Christian doctrine are incorporated into St. Bede's RE and moral education programmes, although (as one deputy head noted) 'youngsters will ask ecumenical questions in any subject'. The predominant ethos is undoubtedly Christian rather than exclusively denominational<sup>64</sup>. Even the chaplains had some difficulty in defining religious understanding in narrow denominational terms: for example, the Roman Catholic was surprised to find her high Anglican colleague shared beliefs she has previously considered exclusively Roman (e.g. Real Presence); yet she found his Evangelical predecessor more akin to her in his approach to evangelism and moral questions, even if some of his doctrinal beliefs seemed very different. While respecting and valuing different traditions, St. Bede's offers a challenge to those who would seek a false sense of security within safely categorised denominational identities.

The need, however, to show that St. Bede's ecumenical cooperation builds on the foundations of distinctive denominational traditions is particularly

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<sup>64</sup>The Church Times entitled its full page article on the school (22nd January 1993): 'No labels by request: St Bede's is a place simply for Christians'.

important for the Roman Catholic community. If Catholic parents are still expected to ensure their child's education in a Catholic environment, St. Bede's has to fulfil all the criteria of a good 'Catholic' school.<sup>65</sup> Endorsement has been evident in the long-standing support for the school by the Bishop of Arundel and Brighton, and recognised by Cardinal Hume's visit in March 1992; but a senior Roman Catholic teacher highlighted the problem:

'Some of the RC clergy are reluctant collaborators, concerned primarily that the 'Ark of the Covenant' should be kept intact... They don't want convergence; reluctant cooperation is as far as they'll go, because the Vatican still insists that only Catholics have the whole truth' (July 1992 interview).

He had also heard concerns expressed by parents in his local parish that Anglicans who only go to Church to have their children admitted to St. Bede's might prevent Catholics being accepted; or that their children will be reluctant to talk about their own faith and practice in an environment where not all pupils are 'believers'. Allaying such unfounded fears is a vital task of the Catholic chaplain, governors and staff, helped by the regular visits of local Catholic clergy to celebrate Mass. However, other Roman Catholic parents were equally adamant that they had deliberately rejected a narrow Catholic education for their children: 'I couldn't believe my luck to have St. Bede's, said one interviewee (June 1992).

The question of a Catholic 'imprimatur' is not only important for the outside community; it is also an issue for staff, particularly since Church school appraisal schemes tend to focus on their distinctive religious ethos. St. Bede's governors' sub-committee had to balance the more open Anglican approach to appraisal (based on good LEA practice) with the more

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<sup>65</sup>One Roman Catholic colleague explained: 'It's like a stick of Brighton rock: you have to see 'Catholic' through every area of the school'.

denominational Roman Catholic guidelines, in devising appraisal criteria appropriate for an ecumenical school. Yet Phil Dineen reflected on her time as headteacher:

‘The key issue was to ensure that the school was acceptable to both Churches without prostituting ourselves in the process.’ (personal interview, January 1993)

St. Bede’s has moved forward both educationally and ecumenically since 1976 under the leadership of three visionary headteachers. In 1992, several staff and governors commented that the current head, Julian Marcus, was ‘an energetic change-agent who leads from the front’, ‘a zealous missionary who would like to see the school promoting ecumenism by bringing the Churches together’. He himself acknowledged that it was tempting to drift into ecumenical ‘navel-contemplation’ rather than to recognise ecumenism as outgoing ‘mission and service’. Yet all concerned were aware that St. Bede’s must not go ahead too fast: it should educate rather than confront, lest it become isolated from its founder Churches.

The challenge posed by St. Bede’s is significant :

‘Our covenant is not about the assimilation of differences, but about the sharing of gifts. We accept that there may be tensions and difficulties in implementing this intention. We acknowledge that it will require prayer, sacrifice, understanding, good will, tolerance and determination from all involved’ (Draft Covenant, June 1992).

This case-study has attempted to demonstrate that such qualities, characteristic of the school since its inception, have been developed and strengthened over the years, providing the Churches with a powerful example of ecumenical cooperation in action.

## CHAPTER VI

### LAGAN COLLEGE, BELFAST "EXPERIMENT" IN ULSTER

"Lagan College is not going to bring peace. That will only come when children grow up and have no reason to kill each other because of religion. But the process has started. Lagan College has broken the mould." (Chairman of Governors, quoted in Newsweek 21 May 1984)

#### CHRONOLOGY OF MAIN EVENTS

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|--------|---|
| 1973-4 | "All Children Together" (A.C.T.) Movement founded   |
| 1974   | Direct rule from Westminster reinstated   |
| 1978   | The Dunleath Act provided an 'integrated education' option  |
| 1981   | A.C.T. decision to open Lagan College for pupils 11-16 :<br>Sheila Greenfield appointed as principal.   |
| 1982   | Lagan College moved to Church Road, Castlereagh   |
| 1984   | Lagan College became a 'voluntary aided maintained' school<br>(85% Government capital funding)          |
| 1987   | Terry Flanagan appointed as principal<br><br>Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education founded. |
| 1989   | Education Reform (N.I.) Order proposed 'grant-maintained,<br>integrated schools.'                       |
| 1980   | Lagan College became 'grant maintained' (100% Government<br>capital funding)                            |
| 1991   | Lagan College opened on new single site at Lisnabreeny<br>House, Castlereagh                            |

## PREFACE

During this research investigation, the idea of including a case-study of Lagan College has faced numerous obstacles. The complexity of Northern Ireland in terms of its history or politics, let alone education, should have been enough to dissuade any interested researcher from making the attempt. However, the cooperation between Lagan's early pioneers and St. Bede's, Redhill, was important in exploring a shared understanding of ecumenical education in different contexts, and the researcher's natural curiosity to observe Lagan's progress in manoeuvring around seemingly insurmountable barriers was difficult to resist.

As before, personal interviews were the main sources of data, including conversations with senior staff, teachers with curriculum or pastoral responsibilities, pupils, parents, governors, and chaplains. Beyond the school itself, I found opportunities during four extended visits between 1985 and 1992 to meet local clergy, Protestant and Catholic, teachers and principals from both segregated and other integrated schools, community workers, educationists and politicians, bishops and archbishops. The frankness with which people talked about their divided society was refreshing if bewildering, but the expressions of hope for a future peace were encouraging.

Unlike Redhill, Northern Ireland has attracted extensive media attention and volumes of research reports on the historical legacy and the effects of segregated education; yet academics have only recently begun to focus on the potential of integrated schools to bridge the social and religious divide. This

chapter draws on these studies to provide relevant statistical information together with historical and sociological perspectives. It also focuses on the attitudes of both Protestant and Roman Catholic Church spokesmen whose influence is still considerable across their communities. When ecumenical relations between the Churches are more defensive than in England, undermined by centuries of bitterness and particularly two decades of violence fuelled by religious hatred, it is not surprising that the Churches' prime concern is to protect their own proper interests.

This chapter traces the determined progress of parents and children in seeking a viable alternative to the segregated school system, and the hesitant moves by politicians in supporting an evolving policy for integrated education - hesitant because it is accompanied by the almost certain risk of antagonising those with vested interests in preserving the 'status quo'.

## 1. Historical Background

The mould of education in Northern Ireland has been hardened over a long period in a climate of political fumbling, suspicion, violence, fear and disillusionment at the abandonment of promises whose fulfilment became too complicated. Such a mould is difficult to break. The problem has been tersely stated by John Darby, a sociologist at the University of Ulster:

‘The history of Irish education is unremarkable except for occasional pioneering experiments and the regularity with which crises accompanied any attempt to alter existing educational practice. What is remarkable is how frequently the crises have been the result of the same dispute -- the extent to which the Churches should control the schools. The most constant thread running through the saga is the deep-rooted suspicion of Catholics towards the state control of their schools.’ (1976) Conflict in Northern Ireland, Dublin, Gill & Macmillan, p. 123.

One cannot plausibly suggest that these suspicions have been without foundation. King Henry VIII, in his self-appointed position (then, under intimidation, conceded by Convocation and by Parliament) as ‘supreme head under God of the Church of England and Ireland’ — a title as offensive to his more Protestant subjects as it was to Roman Catholics -- instructed his Anglican bishops in Ireland to establish schools ‘for to learn English’. The native Irish had no enthusiasm either for the breach with Rome or for the intrusion of an alien language, and their fusion of national identity with Catholicism was massively reinforced by the Church of England’s further shift in a Protestant direction under Edward VI and Elizabeth I, this stage being but a pale prelude to the dismantling of Anglicanism under Cromwell and his ruthless policy of oppression in Ireland. Even in the seventeenth century Irish Catholics were offered the stark choice of education in schools run by Protestant charitable trusts or no education at all. The learned

Anglican Jeremy Taylor, bishop of Down and Connor (1613-67) remarked that the Irish Roman Catholics used to justify their refusal to listen to Anglican theological argument about the papacy or the decrees of Trent with the impregnable consideration that they were unfamiliar with the English language A Dissuasive from Popery, (1664) VI p.176). There were already religious grounds to distrust schools sponsored by the English government.

In the nineteenth century the situation improved. The British administration attempted to establish a system of integrated education for 5-11 year olds in Ireland. This was to be secular, religious education being outside the normal school day. Lord Stanley, Chief Secretary for Ireland and responsible for bringing in the Irish Education Act of 1831, enacted the compromise by which children of all denominations were admitted to schools receiving a government grant: children were taught moral and literary education together and separated for religious instruction taught by their own local clergy. He declared that 'admitting children of all persuasions should not interfere with the particular tenets of any.' Although the Churches, including the Roman Catholic Church, acquiesced in the proposals and accepted them 'faute de mieux', neither Protestants nor Catholics could feel any enthusiasm for the Act. The Protestants, and especially the Presbyterians, wanted to use the Bible during 'secular' instruction and Roman Catholic parents were apprehensive that their children might be exposed to Protestant proselytisation if they were educated side by side with zealous Evangelicals. Under great pressure, the government of the time was forced to allow the national schools to abandon the intended neutrality and in practice to become



denominational schools<sup>1</sup>.

The situation is well summarised by Norman McNeilly:

‘By a strange paradox, the Roman Catholic Church which at first had largely supported the ‘mixed’ or ‘integrated’ principle, had by the end of the nineteenth century become strongly opposed to it. On the other hand, the Presbyterian Church, the Church of Ireland, and the Methodist Church, which initially had opposed the ‘national’ system, decided to support it - but only when the ‘mixed’ principle had been effectively defeated in practice.’<sup>2</sup>

The tensions and violence up to partition in 1921 bequeathed a long legacy of mistrust and unease in the six counties to which ‘Ulster’ was now reduced. The British government had long intended Home Rule, but the vehemence of Carson and the Ulster Protestants demonstrated that the price of carrying the policy through would be high.

The Protestants of Northern Ireland drew the lines to ensure that their interest was given legitimacy as the democratic will of the majority of the people. As Maurice Hayes, a former Ombudsman and Local Government Boundaries Commissioner for Northern Ireland, commented:

‘One result of partition was that Protestants tended to see expressions of Irish culture as belonging wholly to the Catholic community, and indeed as having been hi-jacked for political ends; and because Britishness was so often expressed in terms of Englishness, Catholics tended to see this as something imposed on society, as an initiation test which they could not pass, or would not enter.’ (Paper to Summer School Conference, August 1990)

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<sup>1</sup>O’Buachalla, S. (1985) ‘Church and State in Irish Education in this Century’, European Journal of Education, vol.20, no.4., p.352

<sup>2</sup>(1973) Exactly Fifty Years: the Belfast Education Authority and its work, 1923-1973, B.E.L.B., p.2

In 1923 the government attempted to provide for Ulster an integrated system of education at primary level (5-11 years). Ignoring Sir Robert Lynn's recommendation for denominational religious instruction in schools, Lord Londonderry as the first Minister of Education proposed that religious education was to be forbidden in school hours, and teachers were to be appointed without reference to their religious denomination. It was hoped that the Churches would be willing to transfer their schools to the new Local Authorities established by the Act. Such hopes were naive in their optimism. As John Darby commented, 'With rare ecumenical spirit, all the churches opposed the Act'.<sup>3</sup>

The Roman Catholic Church was determined to retain complete control of its schools and to repel all attempts at interference. This determination can only have been increased by smouldering resentment at partition. The hierarchy immediately declared the Act unacceptable, insisting on a separate denominational system and control of staff appointments. By 1930 teachers' salaries and half the school capital and maintenance costs were paid by the State.

The Protestants felt that the Act was a betrayal of what they had fought for in the Home Rule crisis: a guarantee that their children were educated as Protestants. They demanded assurances that Roman Catholic teachers in State schools would not constitute a 'subversive' influence among their children. Because of the past acceptance of Bible-based religious education, they were already in a position of some strength. By the time their schools were

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<sup>3</sup>(1976) op. cit. p.126

transferred to the new Local Education Authorities in 1930, they had created a system of management that also allowed them to retain effective control over their schools, a position strengthened by the 1930 Education Act giving the transferors' representatives at least half the seats on School Management Committees. They also forced the government into supplementary legislation in 1925 and 1930, which permitted teachers in the transferred schools to give Bible instruction daily.

In this way entrenched positions were taken up by both sides, and down to the present time there has been little substantial change in this situation. Admittedly, there was realisation that the consequences were not ideal, since the Belfast Education Committee meeting on 20 January 1928 recorded dissatisfaction among Protestant clergy at the policy of 'setting up a dual system of education, one system for Roman Catholics, and another for those of any or no religion to which Protestants are compelled to conform.'

The 1947 Education Act (Northern Ireland), based on the 1944 Butler Act, introduced compulsory free secondary education for all. As in Britain, it ushered in a new exciting era of expansion and development. Terence O'Neill, in his autobiography, commented that the Protestant political parties were slow to realize that this 'would produce a new Catholic intelligentsia which would be quite unwilling to put up with the deprived status their fathers and grandfathers had taken for granted' (1972 Granada, p.137.) The education authorities implemented a bold programme of school building, creating 'intermediate' schools for the 80% of children over the age of 11 who were not selected for grammar schools. It is noteworthy that the Director of Education for Belfast submitted a report to his committee as early as

9 January 1953 proposing Comprehensive Secondary Schools which would provide 'suitable courses of secondary education for all ranges of ability' (a plan rejected by the Minister, possibly under pressure from conservative institutions and grammar school interests); later in October 1953 he even proposed abolition of the 11+ qualifying examination, because of its inadequacy as an instrument for selecting children for the tripartite system of 'Intermediate, Technical and Grammar Schools' (a proposal rejected by his Committee). In his history of the Belfast Education Authority, Norman McNeilly commented that the qualifying examination was 'in practical operation little different from the grading of cattle or pigs, but with fewer dependable criteria' (1973, B.E.L.B., p.113). Nevertheless, the 11+ test remains today a key factor in the education system of Northern Ireland and, it is sometimes argued,<sup>4</sup> has provided a vital impetus to the pioneering parents in the movement for integrated schools to launch an alternative system for the post-primary education of their children.

Relations between the Protestant churches and the local Education Committees generally improved after 1947: although the resented requirement on all teachers in Committee schools to give Bible instruction had been withdrawn, (against the Protestant Churches' wishes), the inspection of RE was allocated to 'ministers of religion and other suitable persons' ( 1947 Education Act, 3,21(5) ). The dual system had 'de facto' established itself as a reality since Roman Catholic schools refused to transfer to State control. The more constructive contribution of Protestant churchmen on the Belfast Education Committee in the post-war period prompted Norman McNeilly in 1973 to

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<sup>4</sup>For example by Alex McEwan in Caul, L. (1990) Schools Under Scrutiny: the Case of Northern Ireland, Macmillan Education, p. 139.

speculate that there might be 'new channels of communication between the two parts of the dual system enabling them to come closer' (p.228).

Such views have come to seem over-optimistic as the twenty-first century approaches, and the Protestant Churches are again articulating their concern that their position in 'controlled schools' is being eroded by government policies for improving Catholic 'maintained' education provision and enhancing the integrated sector.<sup>5</sup>

From the late 1960s, public opinion favouring some integrated schooling became more vocal<sup>6</sup>, as the segregation in education was mountingly seen to be one of the root causes of the perpetuation of community conflict. In 1966 Terence O'Neill, the then Prime Minister, even commented publicly at Corrymeela that 'a major cause of division rises from 'de facto' segregation of education along religious lines' - a courageous statement from a government leader which is likely to have cost him some votes, since it certainly implied that educational separation brought social difficulties and that he wished to see the segregation ended<sup>7</sup>.

In 1971 the Presbyterian General Assembly passed a formal resolution declaring that 'integrated education would best service the social, economic,

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<sup>5</sup>Such fears were voiced for example in the Church of Ireland Synod's debate in May 1992.

<sup>6</sup>National opinion polls for the Belfast Telegraph (1967, 1968) and Fortnight magazine (1972) showed a majority in favour

<sup>7</sup>op. cit. 1972, p.79. His remarks were criticised by the Cardinal but supported surprisingly by a Nationalist M.P.

and educational needs of the community.' But the tender plant of hope and confidence was crushed by the progressive elimination of consensus and middle ground in Ulster politics. The men of reason and moderation proved unable to deliver the goods and, particularly after the bloodshed in Derry in 1969, the violence of the IRA and the Protestant paramilitaries exacerbated the tension. London became convinced that it had to shoulder the burden of ruling Ulster directly and, after 1974, services like education fell under the control of larger Area Boards directly answerable to the Secretary of State, thus reducing the power of local councils, many discredited by stories of scandalous bigotry and discrimination.

Despite the deeply discouraging political climate, the goal of establishing some integrated education had not been lost to sight. In 1973 a group of mainly Roman Catholic parents, whose children were attending State schools, met together to form the 'All Children Together' movement. On the ground that these children were not being enrolled at Roman Catholic schools and therefore could not be given 'admission cards', they were in effect being refused confirmation by their Bishop, Dr Philbin of Down and Connor. When his announcement was read out publicly in several parishes at the Sunday Mass, public concern and sympathy became markedly increased. The parents decided to take on responsibility themselves for running Sunday classes of catechetical instruction and even managed to persuade a sympathetic bishop to hold a special Confirmation in a neighbouring diocese in 1978. The 'All Children Together' movement had passed a resolution in 1974 to become inter-denominational in response to many requests from Protestant parents who wished to show solidarity with their aims. The movement stated its aim as follows:

‘to seek the establishment of shared Christian schools where parents so wished (opinion polls show the majority in favour), bringing together the two main Christian traditions and the two cultures in their fullness, in close cooperation with the Churches, knowing that where children grow up together in mutual respect they will no longer fear and hate each other. The members are convinced that Christ does not divide: he is the one solid ground of unity. They desire to awaken in their children a faith and love of God and man that is unitive, ecumenical, exciting, unfettered’ (cited from Lagan College Report, 1981-83).

At the same time, the then Minister of Education in the power-sharing Executive at Stormont (set up after the Sunningdale agreement of 1973), the Right Hon. Basil Mclvor (later first chairman of the governors of Lagan College) publicly stated his belief that ‘the mixing of school children would contribute to the reduction of community tension in Northern Ireland.’ In a lecture given on 6 September 1984 to the Preparatory Schools Conference, Mclvor looked back on the situation of 1974 in the following terms:

‘I recognised the hesitation of the Churches arising from the understandable anxiety about the religious upbringing of their children in schools not under their management, but asked them earnestly to consider the very special needs of Northern Ireland and to join the power-sharing Executive in a constructive approach to meeting those needs. I had in mind the possibility of a new management arrangement which could be accepted by either ‘controlled’ (State) schools or ‘maintained’ (Catholic) schools, leading to a system of shared schools which would operate alongside the existing system.’

He goes on to quote from his speech in Parliament as recorded in Hansard (30 April 1974) as follows:

‘We would consider the possibility of changing the law to facilitate another class of school...in which the two groups of Churches would be equally involved in management. Obviously the details... will have to be worked out in consultation with the interested parties before political proposals for legislation can be formulated.’

In his autobiography Memoirs of a Statesman (1978) p.242, the late Brian Faulkner recalled Mclvor's proposals being brought to the power-sharing Executive. Initially the members from the Social and Democratic Labour Party had reservations about some details of the scheme but they supported the principle and, in the second meeting of the Executive to debate the matter, gave Mclvor's scheme full support.

'Once the decision had been taken, no one wavered from collective responsibility even when the Cardinal and the Catholic bishops launched a strong attack on the whole idea after publication. But the hopes of dealing with this important problem, like many other hopes for Ulster, died with the Executive.'

Nevertheless the 1974 decision showed that a Northern Ireland government, in which both Catholics and Protestants participated, could act to allow for shared schools. The plan cohered with power-sharing.

Under the pressure of the Protestant workers' strike in May 1974, designed as a challenge to constitutional authority, and with the effective failure of London to help the Executive, the Stormont government resigned. <sup>8</sup>Direct rule from Westminster was reinstated. The Minister responsible for education in Northern Ireland declared that because of a lack of 'substantial agreement in favour of the idea'<sup>9</sup>, the Government was not continuing with the plan for integrated education.

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<sup>8</sup>In a personal interview in 1992, Basil Mclvor revealed that, as the subsequent violence increased, Protestants involved in the strikes admitted to him privately that they would probably have given in if he had 'held on for another two weeks'. It was probably one of Harold Wilson's government's worst decisions.

<sup>9</sup>Bishop Philbin wrote in his Lenten pastoral (1975):

'short of banning religion altogether, there is no greater injury that could be done to Catholicism than by interference with the character and identity of our schools'.



Yet by 1977, a 'cautious policy of charitable neutrality' established the principle that the reorganisation of secondary schooling<sup>10</sup> 'should not create nor perpetuate barriers against integrated schooling' (cf. the Dunleath Act of 25 May 1978). A working party of representatives from Protestant and Catholic Churches had even advocated integrated Sixth Form Colleges and nursery schools, ecumenical RE, exchange of teachers and 'agreement that the churches should promote pilot schemes and research projects to find effective ways of bringing together Protestant and Catholic young people at school level'.<sup>11</sup> It is noteworthy that at several stages, the proposal for some integration attracted interest as long as there was no interference with the segregated schooling of 5-16 year olds.

The fact that by 1980 none of these ideas had been taken up suggested that 'everybody's business had become nobody's business'. Even the 1980 Chilver Report interim recommendation to amalgamate the Protestant and Catholic teacher training colleges fell on deaf ears (only the two single-sex Catholic colleges merged in 1985). As Gallagher and Worrall observed in 1982, in spite of discussing the issue of integration, the Churches seemed 'unconvinced at a deeper level than that of a passing thought.' These authors were drawn to the conclusion that 'irrespective of the ideology, both in the short and foreseeable longer terms, integrated schooling in Northern Ireland is "not on".'<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>The government's 1977 proposal for comprehensive reorganisation (earlier recommended by the 1973 Burges Report) was blocked by grammar school interests.

<sup>11</sup>The Report of the Joint Churches Working Party (set up by the Catholic hierarchy and the Irish Council of Churches) (1976) 'Violence in Ireland' p.86.

<sup>12</sup>Gallagher, E. and Worrall, S. (1982) Christians in Ulster 1968-80, pp.168, 171.

## 2. A Question of Identity

It is not perhaps surprising that the Roman Catholic minority should manifest a siege mentality in their struggles to retain their educational strongholds in a hostile environment. Yet the Protestant majority are equally defensive. The historical legacy sketched above may be part of the reason; but the cause may also lie in the strange, 'bi-focal' vision created by the position of Northern Ireland in relation to the Republic. While Protestants are in the majority in the north, they feel under threat from Roman Catholics who politically and spiritually consider themselves united to Dublin and thus in a majority position in relation to Ireland as a whole. Each body therefore considers itself in the position of an embattled minority, and driven, if not entitled, to take up a defensive stance when invited to cooperate.

Much has been written in the attempt to break through this psychological impasse. For example, the Anglican Bishop of Salisbury:

'It cannot be too often repeated that conflict in Ireland is not a religious conflict between Protestants and Catholics as such, but between two sets of people who happen to be one Protestant, the other Catholic. That religious differences have been involved on each side and at every stage to evoke a crusading spirit, to explain the depravity of the enemy, and to stiffen and perpetuate hostility, is true. But, fundamentally, it was for political and military reasons that Catholics were persecuted and Protestants planted; it was in obedience to economic theories that Catholics were made destitute and starving; it was as the landless that Catholics took to the gun against the property owners, of whom many, as a result of English policies, were Protestants' (Bishop John Austin Baker, Furrow Trust, 1984).

Or Eamán Ó Ruairc in The Irish Times for 30 October 1981:

'The Unionists are trapped in a siege mentality. The folk memories of the massacres of the 17th century linger in their collective sub-consciousness. They feel threatened by coercion from without and by subversion from within. Some of them have a gut intuition that they are fighting a losing battle against the tide of history, but that only serves to fuel their desperation. Many of

them suspect that Britain is going to abandon them...Until those fears are removed, the Ulster Unionists will remain psychologically and politically inhibited and therefore incapable of making any movement or granting any concession that would facilitate a solution of the Northern Ireland conflict.'

A writer in the Economist of 2 June 1984 observed:

'The Protestant community has come to prefer direct rule to power-sharing with the Catholics. The Catholic community prefers direct rule to the return of the Protestant ascendancy. There is a premium on the status quo and on behaving irresponsibly towards any British initiative.'

In his comprehensive survey of research into the Northern Ireland community, John Whyte commented:

'Nowhere else does one find the lethal mixture of a large minority with a well-founded and deeply-felt sense of grievance, and a narrow majority with justifiable anxieties about what the future may hold.'  
(1990) Interpreting Northern Ireland, OUP, p.219.

Catholic grievances have been well documented (cf. the 1969 Cameron Commission which pointed to housing discrimination, gerrymandering, the B specials, the Special Powers Act, failure to obtain redress from complaints). The segregation of residential areas, particularly in Belfast, has polarised communities to provide 'a base for self-defence', whereas 'there has been a high correlation between integrated housing and the absence of overt community violence'.<sup>13</sup>

In employment, discrimination is recognised by the Fair Employment Agency as a serious problem, primarily because of the powerful 'informal networks

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<sup>13</sup>Darby, J. (1986) Intimidation and the Control of Conflict in Northern Ireland, Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, p.29. See also Poole, M.A. 'Religious Segregation in Northern Ireland', in Boal F.W. and Douglas, J.N.H., (eds.) (1982) Integration and Division: Geographical Perspectives on the Northern Ireland Problem, London: Academic Press.

of recruitment'. The 56% gap, identified by Compton's researches in 1981<sup>14</sup>, between Protestant and Catholic unemployment levels is difficult to explain 'apart from discrimination or unequal opportunities' (David Smith, in a 1987 report for the Standing Advisory Committee on Human Rights, vol. I, p.39)<sup>15</sup>. The deputy director of the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS) commented (in a personal interview in November 1991) that, although he had an excellent working relationship with the Belfast company Shorts, who were keen to raise the number of applications from Catholics (currently only 8%), Catholic school-leavers either did not want to apply because the training centre was located in the Protestant area of East Belfast or, if they did, the company found too many lacked the basic skills - an issue the CCMS has been trying to address with Catholic schools.<sup>16</sup> Interestingly the principal of Lagan College reported at a conference in June 1992 that the local information, published for employers regarding the religious affiliation of schools from which they recruit pupils, had to acknowledge that, unlike other schools, Lagan College is distinctive in that 'no assumptions about religious affiliation may be drawn from pupils attending this school.'<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>ed. Compton, P. (ed.) (1981) The Contemporary Population of Northern Ireland and Population-Related Issues, Queen's University, Belfast Institute of Irish Studies.

<sup>15</sup>A view confirmed by McWhirter, L. in 'Longitudinal evidence on the teenage years', in Harbison, J.I. (ed.) Growing Up in Northern Ireland, Belfast: Stranmillis College.

<sup>16</sup>The question is also discussed in Chapter 7 of Cormack R.J. and Osborne R.D. (eds.) (1983) Religion, Education and Unemployment, Belfast: Appletree Press.

<sup>17</sup>'In Northern Ireland a person's religion, academic success and social standing can be weighed up by knowing where he went to school. If these are not the best years of an Ulsterman's life, they are some of the most important': Stephen Castle in Seven Day's Magazine, 20 November 1988.

Yet the question of identity is of paramount importance. As the British government recognized:

'The majority of the population of Northern Ireland think of themselves as British. They regard themselves as part of the social and cultural fabric of the United Kingdom and their loyalty lies to the Crown... There is also a substantial minority within Northern Ireland who think of themselves as Irish, whether in terms of their identity, their social and cultural traditions, or their political aspirations... This difference in identity and aspiration lies at the heart of the problem of Northern Ireland; it cannot be ignored or wished away.' (1982) A Framework for Devolution, London: HMSO Cmnd. 8541 paras. 15-17.

'It's all about identity', commented an interviewee to Dervla Murphy. 'Who's what? If everybody in Northern Ireland could answer that question without hesitation, we'd be more than halfway to a solution.'<sup>18</sup> There is an unspoken rule that one never asks another person in Belfast what religion they are, yet it is the one question everyone wants answered 'because that religion is the shorthand note of the other person's education, background, and often his political views.'<sup>19</sup> A Catholic taxi-driver commented that, with the name Gabriel, he was often hassled at police road blocks in Belfast: 'No Protestant has a name like that!' The principal of Lagan College explained that, since his own surname Flanagan was usually a Catholic name, his Protestant allegiance sometimes confused prospective parents. (He commented that previous generations of his family must have 'taken the soup', i.e. converted to Protestantism at the time of the Famine.) The Catholic head of religious education in 1992 emphasized that the children at Lagan are as keen as everyone else to find out one's religion, yet will

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<sup>18</sup> (1978) A Place Apart, London: John Murray, p.126

<sup>19</sup> See Alf McCreary in 'Corrymeela: the search for peace'. Also Cairns, E. (1987) Caught in the crossfire: children and the Northern Ireland conflict, Belfast, Appletree Press.

disguise the question, as in the more legitimate form 'What football team do you support, sir?' 'Once they have satisfied their curiosity and have identified what you are, they just get on with the lesson.'

The significance of religious identity<sup>20</sup> is endorsed by John Hickey in Religion and the Northern Ireland Problem :

'While differences in the social structure between Protestants and Roman Catholics are being slowly eliminated, the importance of the other difference - religion - is being increasingly emphasized. Conflict now centres upon the distinction of religious belief and the 'world-view' based upon it'. (1984) Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, p.105.

John Whyte takes this further by suggesting that the two communities' objections to each other are based on different perspectives.<sup>21</sup> For Protestants the fear is religious in that an autocratic Catholic Church claims the authority of Rome, not merely in preserving the depositum fidei but also in dominating the State south of the border, illustrated by its opposition to the least relaxation of the laws on abortion or birth control in the Republic. For Catholics, the objection is more political and economic, with resentment over the Protestants' political outlook and tight grip on power, illustrated by their opposition to the Anglo-Irish Agreement since 1985. Whyte stresses that 'the task of statesmanship is to devise arrangements whereby the opposing sets of anxieties and grievances can both be assuaged' (p.173).

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<sup>20</sup>See also Eamon Duffy in Priests and People, January 1993, vol.7, no.1.

<sup>21</sup> Whyte J. (1990) Interpreting Northern Ireland, OUP, p.106

The distinction drawn is a comment on Northern Ireland only, and is not an illuminating analysis of the differences between Catholicism and Protestantism taken in depth.

Segregated schools are often cited as having 'an important role in socialising children into sectarianism. The symbols, practices, friendships which are part of a normal school may, in a divided society, reinforce the divisions'.<sup>22</sup> While there are some curricular differences between Catholic and Protestant schools (e.g. in Irish language teaching, and whether they play rugby or gaelic football), it is often through the hidden curriculum that the most influential messages are reinforced. Dominic Murray's 1985 study, Worlds Apart,<sup>23</sup> showed how two schools (one Protestant, one Catholic) initiated children into separate customs, and attitudes, even entitling one chapter 'The Three Rs: Religion, Ritual, and Rivalry'. In the Protestant school, British identity was emphasized by close partnership with the government's education officers and the daily raising of the Union Jack. A Catholic teacher commented: 'They fly the flag down there to show that they are the lords and masters and we (Catholics) should be continually aware of it' (p.113). The Catholic school, on the other hand, was suspicious of government 'intruders' giving advice and displayed its own religious symbols. A Protestant teacher commented, 'It's hard to escape the view that a special show is being put on for our benefit ...They must know that these are the very things that we object to, yet still they are flaunted everywhere' (p.114).

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<sup>22</sup> Darby. J. and Dunn S. 'Segregated Schools: the Research Evidence', in eds. Osborne R.D., Cormack R.J. and Miller R.L. (eds.) (1987) Education and Policy in Northern Ireland, Belfast: Policy Research Institute.

<sup>23</sup> Murray, D. (1985) Worlds Apart: segregated schools in Northern Ireland, Belfast: Appletree Press.

These attitudes and anxieties need to be addressed if community defensiveness and group rivalry are to be overcome. Recent initiatives on inter-school links and 'Education for Mutual Understanding' (see below p. 406f.) may go some way towards breaking down barriers. A Protestant primary teacher involved in these schemes expressed cautious optimism in a personal interview in March 1992: 'When I took my class to the Catholic school to work together on an environmental topic, they played happily together in the playground, although one Protestant Dad (an RUC policeman) had refused to let his child go because he did not want him to hear the bad language of the Catholic children. I also had to forbid the kids to come into school on the day of the visit sporting the regalia of Protestant football teams; but I couldn't stop them wearing red tops, white shoes, and blue trousers!'

Murray's research, however, in recognizing the importance of identity symbols in segregated schools, led him to doubt the effectiveness of integrated education in overcoming the deeply ingrained differences in politics and culture. Would integrated schools 'prohibit any overt signs of religious or cultural aspirations? Which (if any) identity would be fostered? Would all clergy be deprived access? Which flags should be flown? Which prayers said? Which games played? Which songs sung?'<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>Murray, D. (1985) op. cit. pp.134-5



### 3. The Lagan College Story

The integrated schools, like Lagan College, would not pretend they have 'the answer to the Northern Ireland problem', but they point to the fact that 'goodwill and moderation' have not solved it either. Terry Flanagan, Lagan's principal, at a conference in Cambridge in June 1992, quoted Dr David Hempton of Queen's University, Belfast:

'Somehow enmity must be embraced, irreconcilable objectives seen as such. In short, Christian love and truth must not be allowed to degenerate into wishful thinking and idealism.'

Flanagan continued:

'The challenge is to create schools where truth as seen by people holding different beliefs can be freely told to others and accepted and valued by them. It is the challenge of creating school communities where unity consists of 'reconciled diversity' and not uniformity. Such unity will not require that I accept that which I cannot in the interests of facile eirenicism.'

These views are also reflected in Lagan College's prospectus, which states that

'it was the intention of the founders of Lagan College that as well as being an integrated school for pupils of all abilities, Lagan College should also be a Christian school. They believed that Christianity was not 'per se' a cause of our divisions and that properly practised it could prove a source of healing in Northern Ireland.'

Such affirmation of religious diversity is also highlighted by a former pupil, now at the Queen's University;

'My friends there came from different social and religious backgrounds, and I learned that while we were not exactly the same, the differences between us are not enough to justify the suspicion, misunderstanding and fear that has divided our community.'

How successful Lagan has been in bridging the sectarian divide, this chapter will next explore.

## The Early Years

The managers of a new school face the vital task of addressing key issues in securing a firm foundation for their educational community. These issues for Lagan inevitably included the political dimension and relations with the Churches, alongside those related to academic structure, curriculum design, religious education and community liaison. This section focuses on these specific issues in turn.

### **a) Political issues**

‘In Ireland a new nation is being born out of a strife that will, as enlightenment grows, enliven a whole people to a whole new way of life. This new nation is not born in the minds of violence. It is born in the minds of a few prophetic people who have the imagination and creativity to reach beyond the narrow confines of laneways of thought and move into new highways of enlightened cooperation.’

So wrote Cormac O'Connor of Cooperation North, an organisation begun in the Republic in 1978 to promote links between the Republic and Northern Ireland.

Although they might shy away from any description so grandiloquent, the founders of the ‘All Children Together’ movement could be described as ‘prophetic’ in the sense that they both look to the future and wish to ensure that in certain respects it is not like the present and the past. In 1979 their mission was ‘a voice crying aloud in the wilderness’, a plea that for the sake of their children the traditional views of a segregated structure and denominations could be rethought. Their pressure on the government, along with that of some Protestant spokesmen concerned with education, brought about an important change in the law. The Education (Northern Ireland) Act 1978 gave legal authority for the creation of a third integrated sector in the Northern Ireland system, alongside the maintained (mainly Catholic) and

controlled (mainly Protestant) sectors. The intention was to allow ministerial approval for a school to become integrated if Church representatives on the school management committee took the initiative, and if 75% of the parents hoped to keep their children on at the school. Tony Spencer, then a trustee of All Children Together, could observe<sup>25</sup> that the Protestant churches and Area Boards had previously been able to declare boldly to him that they were in favour of integrated education, confident that legislation to make it possible was still remote and unlikely in the future: in 1978 their bluff was being called; they had not realized that, if they were not careful, they would get what they were asking for.

The high hopes generated by such a change in the law were not long in fading. No kind of encouragement came from the Churches, and it soon became evident that a newly established integrated school would necessarily have to start life as an independent and therefore fee-paying school. Such a school would have to demonstrate its viability over three annual intakes before 'aided' status (attracting 85% government funding) could be considered. Only Throne Controlled Primary School in North Belfast attempted to follow the 'integrated' possibility offered by the 1978 Dunleath Act: because of falling rolls it was threatened with closure, so the attempt was made from weakness rather than from strength; no Catholics joined the staff or the governors, no Catholic children enrolled and it finally closed in August 1985.

Notwithstanding the cold feet of Church leaders, some opinion polls indicated a

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<sup>25</sup> Personal interview, May 1992

substantial proportion (over 60%) of the Ulster population in favour of integrated schooling in principle, even if, in practice, only about 30% would actually wish to send their own child to such a school.<sup>26</sup> Fuelled by frustration and impatience, and fearing with reason that their initiative would go the way of so many others, the All Children Together (A.C.T.) movement established in 1979 a charitable trust

‘for the advancement of integrated education, where desired, in Northern Ireland and for the benefit of the children of Northern Ireland in the provision for them of a system of integrated education, where desired, as an addition and alternative to the existing system of Catholic maintained schools and de facto Protestant controlled schools.’

At the annual general meeting of the Movement on 23 March 1981, a group of parents, faced with the prospect of their children leaving segregated primary schools to transfer to segregated secondary schools, persuaded the trustees to try to open a shared school the following September. Although there was some concern in A.C.T. about moving from the model of a successful pressure group to take on an additional role as a development group, two parents, (who were also trustees) argued that their children could not wait any longer. One put it bluntly at the subsequent trustees’ meeting: ‘Would Lagan open in September with A.C.T. or not?’ The recommendation of the annual general meeting was eventually accepted, and the decision made to establish a governing body, to seek a principal, and to raise the money for the cause.

It was decided that the fees would initially have to be set at £625 a year and, to enable children from deprived and often more sectarian areas to enrol, it would be necessary to offer bursaries. This meant that substantial funds

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<sup>26</sup> See the Survey report, Fortnight 1980, issue no.178. Protestants tended to be more supportive than Catholics.

would need to be sought, and an international campaign began, led by an indefatigable Anglican nun, Sister Anna. The balance of Protestants and Catholics among pupils, teachers and management was considered a high priority, the parameter being set at 60:40 respectively.

The sense of urgency was strong and the reason for it noteworthy. One Catholic parent in a personal interview described the problem thus. He had always been clear about the need for a 'change in culture' and had deliberately sent his eldest two children to Protestant grammar schools "in order to mix with Protestants'. However, he found that no concessions were made for his Catholic daughter who reported that, in the first term of French, the class recited 'Nous sommes Protestants'. His third child, who had failed 11+ and gained a fee paying place at a different Protestant grammar school, remembered the music teacher losing patience with the voluntary chapel choir in which she had enrolled, saying 'You sound like a choir on the Falls Road.' When this parent, taking part in a radio broadcast, explained that he had Catholic children who went to Protestant schools, his son burst into tears because his 'cover had been blown'. 'We learnt through their experiences what had to be avoided.' Disillusioned with his own ecumenical experiment, which merely showed how inadequately the Protestant education system treated the Catholic children it took in as part of its 'open door' policy, he committed himself to find an alternative education for his youngest daughter, who had, as expected, failed the 11+ in March 1981. Undoubtedly two motives were present: to obviate the choice of secondary intermediate school for his middle class child, but also to protect her from the 'sectarian' culture of the exclusively Catholic school.

As the summer of 1981 progressed, the Protestant and Catholic communities were further polarised by the Maze hunger strikes. Nevertheless, the parents and trustees pushed forward with public meetings, fund-raising, searches for a site, and the appointment of a principal whose salary they could not at that stage guarantee to pay. Tony Spencer, a Roman Catholic and a lecturer at Queen's University, recalls: 'It was unbelievable the support we got. People would stop you in the street, in the post office, and say "What a marvellous thing you're doing." (cited in T.E.S., 14 September 1984). As the principal appointed (Sheila Greenfield) observed, the parents knew that if they were slow to act, it would be too late for their own families; and that was why they went ahead so rapidly.

The impetus had now become too strong to resist. In order to offer integrated education to all children, the College had to step outside the normal Ulster 11+ selection procedure. It had to open its doors to children of all abilities, boys and girls. Because of the total commitment of the parents from the start, the school enjoyed sustained support in all its activities. Especially in its first year, parents took responsibility as dinner supervisors, cleaners, and bus drivers. The first intake of 28 pupils moved into a scout centre with two teachers (whose salaries were paid by charitable fundraising) and at the end of each day had to pack everything away into cupboards. The deputy head recalled his relief when the scouts removed their Union Jack from the room without being asked, before the pupils moved in. The camaraderie of those early days remains alive in the school to the present time. One pupil ten years later remembered that only a flimsy curtain separated the two classes: 'the whole school knew if you had not done your homework!'

The attitude to integrated education shown by Ministers in the Northern Ireland Office can only be described as hesitant. The Department of Education in Northern Ireland insisted that Lagan must pay its own way without state aid for a full three years to prove its viability, which may sound fair enough until one recalls that such a policy would not naturally or automatically be applied to a new Roman Catholic aided school. The resentment felt by the Lagan pioneers was understandable.

'It is particularly annoying to be told that parents are able to choose the sort of school they want for their children, when there are only two choices, both committing children into segregated systems'. (Newsletter of the All Children Together movement, June 1983.)

The government did not wish to put taxpayers' money into projects which few citizens of the land wished to have. The then Northern Ireland Parliamentary Under-Secretary, Nicholas Scott, a man with considerable parliamentary experience in the Conservative party, commented:

'we are in favour of integration, but not by imposing it on people. Since it is the wish of the majority that children be educated in accordance with their own ethos, integrated education is not on for the foreseeable future.' Newsweek (21 May 1984):

This utterance conveyed the impression that if integrated education was not for everybody, the government was unwilling to help anybody to have it, even if they wanted it. Politically the reserve of the Northern Ireland Office was intelligible as a cautious reaction in face of the manifest fears of both Protestant leaders and the Roman Catholic hierarchy, whose cooperation cannot be unimportant to the government of Ulster.

Nevertheless, in the three years as an independent school, the cost was estimated at more than £500,000, and there is no doubt that had State aid been withheld in April 1984 when monthly expenditure reached £20,000,

the school could have had no option but to close. Intense political pressure from such powerful figures as James Callaghan, Lady Plowden and others, was brought to bear upon the Secretary of State, James Prior. Tony Spencer, then Lagan treasurer and a founder parent, recalled a private interview with Nicholas Scott, in which the Minister gave his personal assurance that the school would achieve 'maintained', voluntary-aided status by the following April. Lagan College survived.

But the financial position was not yet secure. The trustees were torn between either keeping the school on its site in Church Road at Castlereagh ( to which it had moved from the scout centre in January 1982) and allocating funds to mobile classrooms as the school expanded further, or conserving its limited resources to make possible the 15% down payment on the purchase price of a new building. The local council, which could hardly be invulnerable to subtle political pressures, placed obstacles in the path, all for reasons which to the council looked legitimate and to the College governors looked 'technical'. They objected to the school's expansion on its existing site, so that, by September 1985, the new intake of four classes of 11 year olds had to be housed in an annexe five miles away, provided by the Education and Library Board, and travel to use the specialist facilities in the afternoons. In the event, as temporary planning approval expired in 1988, the governors had no choice but to move to a new site.

The negotiations of the governors with the local council illustrate the point that, though the school had support from some weighty Ulster Protestants, it did not command the support of all. One must also expect that the lack of enthusiasm towards the school manifested by the Roman Catholic authorities



may have contributed to the degree of support which it found among some Protestants. The governors hoped that, as falling pupil rolls led to amalgamations and closures, a redundant school building in South Belfast might be made available; but in the end no school was closed. They investigated more than 130 sites with the help of a property committee (representing parents, governors, estate agents, etc.) before successfully negotiating with the National Trust to purchase a 99-year lease on the 18.5 acres of Lisnabreeny House, nearby in Castlereagh. By September 1987, 200 pupils were accommodated in semi-permanent mobiles on the new site, with 500+ still at Church Road. The school was finally reunited on one site at Lisnabreeny in September 1991.

It was not until 1989 that the government finally gave formal recognition and approval to 'integrated education' in the Education Reform (N.I.) Order, following consultations throughout 1988. Based on the policy of extending the principle of parental choice (in Britain already enshrined in the 1988 Education Reform Act), it announced that its new proposals for grant-maintained schools attracting 100% government funding could include a specific category of 'grant maintained integrated schools' which would demonstrate 'a strong commitment to and progress towards full integration between Protestant and Roman Catholic pupils'.<sup>27</sup> There was vehement opposition from the Roman Catholic Church, which had recently established its own Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS), and was lobbying against the 'injustice' of still having to find the 15% of capital funding for their schools. The Catholic lobby was understandably incensed that the

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<sup>27</sup>Department of Education, Northern Ireland, Proposals for Reform, March 1988, p. 19.

government should be favouring the new integrated status with 100% funding, particularly as the Northern Ireland Curriculum proposals required a considerable expansion of specialist facilities in science and technology. 'The threat to the Catholic school system...may be even greater, especially in the light of recent government legislation, which effectively discriminates in favour of alternative forms of educational provision.'<sup>28</sup>

The Protestants too were unhappy. They were concerned that a third (grant-maintained) sector in education could undermine their powerbase position in relation to 'controlled' schools and divert funding. This anxiety was most recently articulated at the General Synod of the Church of Ireland in Dublin in May 1992, when clergy claimed that their role and influence had diminished since 1989, and that the pupils in State schools - almost all Protestants - were 'getting a raw deal'.<sup>29</sup> Nevertheless, on behalf of the Church of Ireland, Archbishop Robin Eames of Armagh acknowledged that 'the view my Church has taken is that, where parental choice signifies that they want the experiment of integrated education to take place, then it ought to be'.<sup>30</sup>

During the consultation period, the Times leader of 8 October 1988 commented that the government's claim for an encouraging level of support for integrated education was 'less than the whole truth... The government must know that there is nothing like a consensus in support of integrated

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<sup>28</sup> (1990) C.C.M.S. paper, p.5. Catholic schools were themselves finally offered 100% government funding in 1992.

<sup>29</sup> Times Educational Supplement, 29 May 1992.

<sup>30</sup> Fortnight 13 September 1991

education and that powerful vested interests of all kinds from both sides of the religious divide are ranged against it.' In 1989 the Government had probably decided to gamble that the time was right to come out in official support of the few integrated schools, still struggling financially on charitable donations. The fact that no denominational interest would wish to be seen opposing the principle of parental choice was advantageous politically, and the offer of 100% funding for grant-maintained integrated schools could bring kudos to ministers under pressure to be seen taking positive action to ameliorate one of the causes of Northern Ireland's troubles.

When eventually the Order was enacted in February 1990 to enable funding to come through by September, the recently formed Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education (N.I.C.I.E.) breathed a sigh of relief. The Chief Executive, Fiona Stephen, recalled the tension of trying to run five integrated schools, one secondary and four primaries<sup>31</sup> with no budget to pay staff salaries or purchase the required new sites: 'it was a seat of the pants job.' In May 1991 the Minister, Lord Belstead, also agreed to offer grant aid to assist N.I.C.I.E. in supporting further developments in integrated education across the Province. By the beginning of 1992 over 3000 children were being educated in planned integrated schools, more than 1% of the school population.

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<sup>31</sup>excluding Lagan, which by 1986 had already been granted voluntary-aided status: nevertheless their 15% governors' contribution was difficult to raise.

## **b) The Churches' response**

Analysis of the Churches' response to integrated ecumenical education is inevitably a piece in the complex jig-saw of the intertwining interests of religion and politics in Northern Ireland. We may attempt to examine the Protestant position first.

### **i) The Protestants**

Protestant supremacy has not only meant permanent control of the government by the enforcement of the majority view in the name of democracy (leaving the minority with the sense of being excluded from equal participation). It has also meant a belief in a superior social position and a difference of economic status and opportunity. The traditional Unionist and Orange convictions, expressed with force and clarity by the Revd Ian Paisley, clearly show the fervour and commitment of Irish Protestantism in the North. Dervla Murphy commented with the sympathetic detachment of a Southern Republican of liberal persuasion:

‘The average Northern Ireland Protestant is convinced that his forefathers were God-fearing, diligent, sober, honest, thrifty settlers whose virtues entitled them to take over the neglected lands of the superstitious, lazy, drunken, sly, shiftless natives’. (1978) A Place Apart, John Murray, p.100.

She went on to quote an example of the bigotry which this conviction can produce:

‘A fourteen year old Protestant boy, horrified to discover that his French oral examiner was to be a nun, telephoned his mother. ‘No child of mine will ever be examined by a Taig’, she replied. ‘And don’t worry about your exam. I’ll be on to the Education Authority now this minute.’ That fourteen year old attained instant fame as the hard-done-by opponent of pernicious ecumenism’ (p.101).

Murphy suggested that Protestant bigotry was, or at least appeared, far more

entrenched, abrasive and aggressive than the Roman Catholic equivalent. Evangelical assurance encourages Protestants to suppose that they speak and act with the right of God on their side; by contrast 'Roman Catholics derive from their membership of the Roman Catholic Church an inner assurance which makes their bigotry that much less aggressive.' One person's devotion is another's fanaticism, and it is difficult to accept that Murphy's antithesis can be entirely fair. The two communities seem to be equally misinformed about each other's beliefs and traditions of practice, and equally ready to misrepresent one another<sup>32</sup>. In relation to the integration of education, the opposition of Protestants appeared veiled, whereas suspicion, not to say direct opposition, had been unconcealed on the part of the local Roman Catholic bishop.

This disapproval by the Catholic hierarchy let the Protestant Churches off the hook in several ways. First, Protestant ministers in the non-episcopal Churches are chosen by their congregations, and it would be difficult for them to follow a line independent of their flock. 'The great majority of church members in Northern Ireland....instinctively expect their ministers to support the traditional sectarian parties which on each side are supposed to give political expression to true Christianity as they see it.'<sup>33</sup> Since the Protestants fought long and hard to protect their own interests in

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<sup>32</sup>'The two dominant cultures, are so mutually antipathetic that any demonstration of one is perceived to be an assault on the other'. Murray, D. (1983) Irish Educational Studies vol. 3, no.2.

<sup>33</sup> Gallagher, E. and Worrall, S. 1982) Christians in Ulster, OUP, p.200. Also Darby, J. (1976) Intimidation and the Control of Conflict in Northern Ireland, Dublin: Gill & Macmillan p.130: 'I would alienate half my parish if I invited a Roman Catholic priest to my church,' said one minister.

education, they were as reluctant as the Catholics to take any risks with the 'status quo'. Secondly, the Church of Ireland ministers had to watch their backs for fear of undermining their position vis-a-vis the Republic. As a minority community south of the border, they have argued forcefully for the protection of their own schools and denominational teaching.<sup>34</sup> They therefore had to be cautious in their stance on integrated education north of the border or in appearing to undermine the Catholic minority's defence of their schools in Northern Ireland.

Nevertheless, the Churches publicly responded to the government consultations leading up to the Dunleath Act (1978). The Presbyterians had already passed two resolutions in favour of integrated education. The Methodists recognised it as 'one step toward improved relationships'. The Church of Ireland welcomed the initiative:

'It will be difficult for anyone who is sincerely concerned about growing understanding between our two communities not to wish the Minister well in an experiment, which demands of all participants the willingness to take a calculated risk for the possible greater good of the whole community.'

The main Protestant Churches had also developed effective ecumenical links with their colleagues through the British Council of Churches - of which the Roman Catholic Church was not a member - and therefore, it was argued<sup>35</sup>,

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<sup>34</sup>See Archbishop Robin Eames speech to the General Synod, May 1992.

<sup>35</sup>Gallagher and Worrall, (1982) op.cit. p.211

had a broader ecumenical perspective than either the Catholics or the Free Presbyterians.<sup>36</sup> It is not without weight that the Anglican Archbishop of Dublin, H. R. McAdoo, played a major part in the agreements of the Anglican Roman Catholic International Commission articulated in the 'Final Report' of 1982. Therefore, when Lagan College was opened, offers of assistance with the pastoral and denominational support for the children were forthcoming. Although they would be hesitant about their status as official representatives of their respective Churches, the Protestant chaplains from the Presbyterians, Methodists, Anglicans, Baptists, and non-subscribing Presbyterians<sup>37</sup>, gave willingly of their time to ensure the Lagan children received pastoral encouragement.

ii) The Roman Catholics

Roman Catholic teachers working on the staff of Lagan College fervently wished that their own Church could more openly offer support to so courageous a venture, but it is not the way of the Irish hierarchy to yield ground. The inveterate hostility to mixed marriages remains (the RC Church in England and Wales eased its rules on 6 April 1990) and insistence on the 'Ne Temere' decree enforcing the Roman Catholic upbringing of the children has only in recent years required no written undertaking. Protestant

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<sup>36</sup>This group, led by Ian Paisley, has been vociferous in opposition to ecumenism. At the Martyrs' Memorial Church on 26 January 1975, Mr Paisley said: 'The Lord will not deliver Ulster while her people do not realise that there are strange gods among us in the form of ecumenical clergy....who would lead the Protestants of Ulster astray' (Irish Times 27 January 1975).

<sup>37</sup> Non-subscribing Presbyterians are mainly found in Ireland. In the 18th century they split off from the Presbyterians who required ministers to sign the Westminster Confession, claiming that the authority of the Bible was all that should be recognised, not any interpretation of it; they then moved towards Unitarianism and Arianism, deciding that the doctrine of the Trinity is absent from Scripture. Their links with British churches are with the Unitarians.

reserves were not lessened by the vehement opposition of the Roman Catholic hierarchy to the decision of the Dublin government led by Garret Fitzgerald that it was politically necessary to make artificial means of birth control more freely available, partly on the ground that the exposure of unwanted children is far worse. (See The Times report, February 18 and 22, 1985.) The Roman Catholic Church in Ireland has not always been so hostile to the presuppositions of contemporary society. In the first half of the nineteenth century Gallicanism had more following than Ultramontaniam among members of the hierarchy, and there was less use of language which appears authoritarian. In 1826 the Roman Catholic bishop of Kildare and Leighlin, James Doyle, O.E.S.A. (bishop from 1819 until his death in 1834), declared:

‘I do not know of any measure which would prepare the way for a better feeling in Ireland, than uniting children at an early age and bringing them up in the same school, leading them to commune with one another and to form those little intimacies and friendships which often subsist through life.’ (Select Committee on the state of the poor in Ireland, V11 pp. 426-7.)

This surprising declaration belonged to a time when Catholic emancipation was being urgently pressed at Westminster and when the Roman Catholics in England<sup>38</sup> were striving to reassure public opinion that Catholicism was not seditious or treasonable to the Crown. But in the twentieth century it is hard to imagine that so optimistic and ‘progressive’ an opinion could come from a member of the Irish hierarchy. The bishops had real grounds for apprehension that too great an enthusiasm for integrated education could result only in injury to Roman Catholic schools, to which Roman Catholic parents ought to be sending their children rather than to places like Lagan

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<sup>38</sup>e.g. Archbishop Wiseman (to the Select Committee on Education in Ireland, 1836): ‘It might easily be managed to give Protestants and Catholics a common education, reserving religious education of their respective classes to their own pastors’.



College. Roman Catholic parents, therefore, who chose to send their children to Lagan were put under moral pressure. Their action looked like disloyalty to their Church, tantamount to surrendering the heart of the faith in favour of religious indifferentism. Back in 1976, the Catholic hierarchy had given unexpected prominence to education in the Directory on Ecumenism in Ireland (Dublin: Veritas), acknowledging the challenge presented to their schools by the ecumenical movement and the tragic conflict in Northern Ireland. However, they argued that

‘the replacement of Catholic by interdenominational schools in Ireland would not contribute to overcoming the divisions in our midst...We must point out that in such schools the full Catholic witness is inevitably diluted.’

Bishop Cahal Daly<sup>39</sup> himself endorsed the official line in an article on ‘Ecumenism in Ireland’ in the Irish Theological Quarterly (1978). However, dissenting Catholic voices were beginning to be raised to these utterances of the hierarchy. Fr John Brady, the Jesuit Director of the College of Industrial Relations, wrote in 1978:

‘There are no insuperable difficulties about educating Catholic and Protestant children in the same school.’ If the Catholic Church was ‘prepared to pursue its legitimate interests in education through participative structures, at least in some instances and on an experimental basis,’ it would be saying ‘in deeds rather than words that they do not wish to perpetuate the divisive social structures of Northern Ireland.’

This concession that integrated schools could be recognized as ‘experimental’ was finally offered in 1982 by Cardinal O’Fiaich, then Cahal Daly’s

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<sup>39</sup> Cardinal Cahal Daly, now Archbishop of Armagh, was previously Bishop of Down and Connor from 1982. Before this, he was for 15 years Bishop of Ardagh and Clonmacnois, having previously served for 21 years lecturing on scholastic philosophy at Queen’s University, Belfast.

predecessor as Archbishop of Armagh<sup>40</sup>, in the Irish Times 30 January 1982.

The official policy of theoretical detachment and practical discouragement obviously created acute difficulties for Roman Catholic parents sending their children to Lagan College. During the first year or two of the school's life, these parents put their shoulder behind the success of the project, and for the time being tolerated their Church's position. As the Catholic parents became more vocal, their sense of frustration at lack of support from their parish clergy could be increasingly felt. At one meeting in November 1982 they formally expressed the hope that their Church would make appropriate arrangements for their children's catechesis.

It cannot be easy for Roman Catholic bishops anywhere to give their priests and people a strong lead that they do not wish to follow, and in Ireland the difficulties must be considerable for any sensitive pastor among the hierarchy. Bishop Daly did not feel able to speak in favour of integrated education, and indeed his response highlighted some practical disadvantages: it meant 'bussing' children out of their communities, an artificial exercise; single-denominational schools were more representative of their neighbourhood community, and provided pupils with a stronger sense of identity and security, facilitating the natural partnership of parish, home, and school, which a distant integrated school could hardly hope to do. That objection, however, was more obviously valid for particular areas like the Shankill or the Falls, (where no one could seriously suggest the

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<sup>40</sup>Back on 16 January 1978, O'Faich had also commended the appointment of a Protestant to the management committee of a Catholic grammar school.

establishment of an ecumenical school) and loses much of its validity out in the more mixed residential areas of south Belfast where Lagan College is situated.

The Roman Catholic approach to ecumenical education was more than cautious. They seemed to feel that they had everything to lose, little to gain. Monsignor Colm McCaughan, in 1992 Director of the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools but then secretary of a diocesan education committee, decisively commented to a reporter from the magazine Newsweek (21 May 1984): 'Integrated education is a facile solution to an extremely complex problem. I cannot give encouragement or approve of it.' Bishop Daly himself formulated the same negative attitude in a radio phone-in programme after the New Ireland Forum in February 1984: 'I do not see integrated education as the way forward.' An institution such as Lagan College was tolerated with difficulty as a possible alternative for a few interested parents, but they were in effect tolerated only because they were so few. Thus Bishop Daly's response to Senator (now President) Mary Robinson during the Forum was reported in the following terms in the Newsletter of the All Children Together movement:

'The Bishop said the Church did nothing to oppose the efforts of people to promote inter-denominational schooling. But such a development affected very few people and left unaffected those who needed this kind of mixing most.'

The Newsletter commented with unconcealed regret:

'We remain saddened that some priests and nuns who are willing to be involved in religious education and pastoral care for children not in attendance at Roman Catholic schools, do not feel free to do so.'

The Catholic deputy principal of Lagan College felt disappointed that in 1984 Bishop Cahal Daly still held negative views of integration as not the way

forward. 'If only he could be persuaded to go so far as to grant 'experimental' status - like O'Fiaich - and the experiment is judged to have been successful, the implications would be important.'

It became evident that the official Roman Catholic policy locked the Church into a circle from which there was no escape. On the one hand, the bishop's reason for seeing no solution in ecumenical education was that it could affect only a few. On the other hand, the quantity of ecumenical education which did exist was tolerated only to the degree that the minimum number of Catholic parents shared in it. In an age when support for serious and profound ecumenical engagement is the policy of an ecumenical council and of successive popes, it is impossible for a Roman Catholic bishop to disapprove of ecumenism without flying in the face of his own authorities. But the division in Ulster between Catholic and Protestant is a wound going so deep that there is not much room for the principle that Christians should do together what they are not absolutely required to do separately.

By the summer of 1984 nothing had been done to answer the parents' cry for help. They requested regular meetings and a celebration of Mass perhaps in a church in the city centre; their requests were met with a quiet refusal. Roman Catholic priests wishing to respond positively feared being sent into a kind of 'internal exile' in much the way that has been experienced by Presbyterian ministers<sup>41</sup> determined to build a bridge to Roman Catholic communities. (The Ulster phrase for this is 'sent to Rathlin Island', a rocky outcrop off the east coast of Northern Ireland.) At Christmas 1983, when the

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<sup>41</sup> See Revd. David Armstrong (1985) A Road Too Wide, Collins.

school included Roman Catholic representatives among the invitations to the Carol Service, it was necessary to negotiate a private understanding that any priest who attended would not be subjected to penalty or discipline: yet in 1985, 1000 attended Lagan's carol service in a Catholic Church on the Falls Road. One consequence of the Church's attitude was a genuine concern among Lagan's Roman Catholic parents that their children might lose their distinctive Catholicism. The official policy of the hierarchy seemed to be that Roman Catholics should not go to Lagan College for fear of losing or diluting their loyalty to the church, whereas their policy of coldly ignoring the institution seemed specifically designed to bring about the consequence which they feared. In Roman Catholic schools, a class mass would normally be held at least once a term. On days of obligation pupils at Lagan who attended mass in the morning necessarily arrived later at school because no celebration at the school was authorised. The Roman Catholic parents felt that this deliberate policy was at variance with the pastoral care which they expected from their Church.

The Roman Catholic head of religious education even produced a dossier of quotations from authoritative Catholic documents to inform discussion of the topic 'May Catholic parents choose Lagan College?' and these were cited to vindicate the parents' view. Three quotations suffice to illustrate the strength of the contention:

'Acknowledging its grave obligation to see to the moral and religious education of all its children, the Church should give special attention and help to the great number of them who are being taught in non-Catholic schools'. (1965) Vatican II, Declaration on Christian Education, Gravissimum Educationis, 28 October (tr. Flannery, p.732).

'The fact that in their own individual ways all members of the school community share this Christian vision, makes the school 'Catholic'.' (1977) The Catholic School, Catholic Truth Society, p.14.

'In situations where, for one reason or another, Catholics and members of other churches are educated together, every attempt should be made to diminish the inherent disadvantages for religious formation. It is to be hoped that whatever Church is in charge of such schools would agree to arrangements by which children of other denominations could receive a religious education in accordance with the requirements of their own churches.' (1976) The Directory on Ecumenism in Ireland, published by the Catholic Hierarchy.

The situation presupposed in the last quotation is evidently that of Roman Catholic children educated in schools with a Protestant affiliation. But the principle should apply 'a fortiori' in the case of a school of integrated character. It might have been easier for the Roman Catholic parents if the cool policy of detachment were replaced by complete negativity: a reluctant toleration made for peculiar difficulties. As the number of Roman Catholic children educated in integrated schools increased, however, the Church authorities were less able easily to dismiss them as a small minority problem created by parents of little judgement who had opted out of the Roman Catholic educational system in defiance of their priests and pastors. As integrated education continues to expand, the hierarchy could feel more threatened, resulting in outright opposition to ecumenical developments in education. Alternatively the Church authorities may be moved to take seriously and positively the parents' desire to see an authentically Catholic education within an integrated framework. In the meantime, the balanced, interacting triangle of relationships of home, school, and parish has one piece missing at Lagan.

### c) Initial Academic Issues

Just as education intrudes into Irish religion and politics, so politics and religion intrude into Irish education. What might seem to external observers to be a straightforward set of issues on curriculum or teaching method comes to take on another dimension. This is especially the case in the context of integrated education.

At Lagan College the parents of the first three annual intakes paid fees. In all private fee-paying schools, parents feel entitled to a considerable say in the teachers' decisions affecting their child. The first Lagan parents, who by acting as dinner-supervisors, drivers, or cleaners, were responsible for keeping the school open at all, naturally felt a proprietary concern.<sup>42</sup> Built into Lagan's constitution was a Parents' Council, which would channel communication from parents both to the school and to the governing body. As one parent recalled, this had the positive effect of educating the parents along with their children into what integrated education meant in practice; it also provided a forum for discussion and at times heated debate. The parent governors were often able to defuse situations which would otherwise have gone straight to the governors. In the early stages, this 'conflict-resolution' framework is said to have proved invaluable.

In Northern Ireland selection at 11+ is the norm. To pass this Qualifying Examination is to enter the door of opportunity. The competition for places in the grammar schools is fierce. There must be few parents willing to endanger their child's established path to success through the grammar

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<sup>42</sup> Note that this was prior to legislation in Britain (1986, 1988) which increased parental influence in school and paved the way for "The Parents' Charter" 1991.

schools by taking the risk of an integrated experiment. In consequence, a fair proportion of early Lagan parents were those whose children failed to pass the 11+ examination but who, mixed in with higher motives, saw Lagan as a superior option to, and even an escape from, the secondary modern or 'intermediate' system. Accordingly, parental ambitions and expectations ran high. Lagan's staff could not avoid facing demands that in their view might be unrealistic. The chairman of the governors commented that the heart of the problem was 'to show that integration can go with a demonstrated commitment to excellence.'

The situation was exacerbated by constraints of size. The school was not large. Although nineteen subjects were offered to the first public examination cohort of 59 pupils in 1986, such a tiny proportion of these pupils was capable of achieving O level that mixed ability teaching was necessary; staff's lack of expertise in this methodology meant success in O level became more difficult for those children who might achieve it. The converse of the problem appeared in the study of English literature, where only O level could be offered because the set texts for CSE courses were different.

The balancing of pupil ability with parental expectation put the staff under severe pressure. Teaching a class of mixed ability was for many of the staff a new experience: in the majority of cases they had taught only within the selective Ulster system, and had little or no opportunity for retraining in the delicate task of stretching the more able and supporting the slow learners sitting in the same class. The first principal, fortunately, had a real understanding of an all-ability comprehensive school and encouraged the staff



in mixed ability methodology.

A founder parent interviewed in May 1992 recalled that the principal insisted on dual entry for GCE/CSE in 1986 where possible, in order to build up the school's academic credibility and to enhance the pupils' qualifications. He expressed his concern at this policy because of pupil work overload, but granted that she had a 'marvellous way of getting contentious issues through the Governing body. She also had a real understanding of a comprehensive school, and was able to help her staff, accustomed to a selective system, to cope with mixed ability teaching.'

At the same time she wisely did nothing to encourage parents in unrealistic aspirations, but had to recognise the problem that the public success of Lagan was likely to be judged by its examination results. With GCSE syllabuses still in the future, she had to provide the opportunity for O as well as CSE teaching. Her sensitive formula in reply to inquiries was that 'results will be good for the ability of the pupils.' There is no school which does not face a dilemma here. The advertised curriculum offers courses to suit all abilities, yet it is the traditional academic bias which attracts parents to send their children to the school in the first place. (Few head teachers have not been asked on an Open Evening whether Latin is on the comprehensive school curriculum) An excessively academic approach has rapid repercussions in the breakdown of classroom discipline: where children cannot cope with a subject, they are most likely to express their anxiety in disruptive behaviour. Parental ambitions create a situation where the best interests of the children are at odds, from the school's point of view, with the requirements of a public relations exercise. In Northern Ireland, more than

in most places, the choice of priorities here is exquisitely painful.

#### **d) The Curriculum**

What could seem more straightforward than the three Rs? Or in Church schools is it four Rs? Yet oversimplification of this kind is inappropriate for any school, and for an ecumenical institution damaging. As the experience at Redhill in suburban Surrey shows, in the context of a two-denominational school, religious education is far from being the only subject to need thought and scrutiny. An analogy might be noted in the way that many multi-ethnic schools now emphasize multi-cultural awareness across the curriculum.

Single-church schools are often homogeneous in their pupil intake. They can therefore feel free to reflect a specific culture and ethos in their curriculum. Nowhere is this more evident than in Roman Catholic or Protestant schools in Northern Ireland. Although there are practically no native speakers of the Irish language in Northern Ireland, Roman Catholic schools regard Gaelic as their birthright<sup>43</sup> and guarantee it a place alongside continental languages in a way that Protestant schools would not. Music may also reflect different cultural backgrounds: Catholics include a strong Gaelic tradition uncongenial to most Protestants<sup>44</sup>. Another case in point is literature. The integrated school has to attempt sensitively to maintain the balance between two distinct

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<sup>43</sup> My Catholic taxi-driver in the Falls Road waxed lyrical about the success of the one 'Gaelic-medium' primary school in Belfast (I only found out later that the deputy head at Lagan had sent his children there). 'Comhaltas Uladh', a non-political and non-sectarian organisation founded in 1926 to encourage the teaching of Irish language and culture, took 'an active interest in the teaching of Irish in Lagan College at its inception.'

<sup>44</sup>'Fiddledeedee music', said one Protestant disparagingly in interview.

cultural and social traditions.

If religion may appear rather marginal to the difference of tradition in music or Gaelic, that cannot be true of history. Through their reading of the past, rival communities defined themselves. The history syllabus, especially the Reformation<sup>45</sup>, contains 'dynamite' for an ecumenical school, and in Ulster the contemporary tensions perpetuate misinterpretations and myths about the causes of the confessional divide<sup>46</sup>. But anxiety about the teaching and history of the Reformation pales into insignificance beside attempts to teach the Battle of the Boyne or the 1916 Uprising to a mixed class of Belfast Protestants and Catholics. In state schools, Irish history is frequently seen as an adjunct to English history since, after all, the great political decisions of people in power were normally made there, seldom in Dublin. In the past, though now much less so, Roman Catholic schools have preferred to treat Irish history as the story of noble heroes maintaining national culture and feeling under an alien and oppressive foreign rule. The Irish story is told in terms of Catholicism defining the identity of the people, suffering through the centuries from Tudor monarchs, Cromwell, and the penal laws. The phenomenon is not, of course, unknown in England where the latent assumption that somehow Protestantism and English nationalism are linked is less dead than some imagine.

Lagan had the good fortune that one of the founder teachers had previously

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<sup>45</sup>The best guide to the different interpretations of the Reformation is now Dickens, A.G. and Tonkin, J (1985) The Reformation in Historical Thought (Oxford: Blackwell). It is a pity that Irish history falls outside its survey.

<sup>46</sup>The same Catholic taxi-driver was adamant that discrimination against Catholics arose from 'Protestants not being told the truth about 1916.'

been a history teacher in a Catholic grammar school, and the experience had led him to the conviction that social tension is perpetuated by rival 'nationalisms' in the way people understand the past of the society. Their understanding of their past determines their sense of identity. His job must have been among the more exciting and taxing in Northern Ireland. He felt that if he could involve children from both confessions in looking at the evidence together, he would elicit a frank exchange of opinion and 'gut reactions' which, in terms of educational experience, could prove creative. He described how his ideas were put to the test one Friday afternoon when all pupils in the first three years at Lagan were involved in a lively debate on 'This house believes the plantation of Ulster was a good thing.' In the context of an integrated community where the children know each other well, and with an experienced teacher handling the exchanges, such encounters helped each side towards mutual cooperation and comprehension. Significantly the Northern Ireland Curriculum Council subsequently drew on this teacher's expertise in devising the cross-curricular theme of 'Cultural Heritage', with specific links into the R.E. and History programmes and 'Education for Mutual Understanding.'<sup>47</sup> (see his 'Religion in Ireland: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow' curriculum materials trialled in 1990).

Comparable controversy can enter even the playing fields. In general terms Protestant grammar schools follow the English public school tradition of rugby and cricket, whereas Catholic schools teach Gaelic football. To add to the confusion, Protestant matches are held on Saturdays, while Gaelic football

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<sup>47</sup>The Northern Ireland Curriculum Council defined 'Education for Mutual Understanding' as "self-respect and respect for others, and the improvement of relationships, between people of differing cultural traditions."

kicks off on Sundays<sup>48</sup> - in the eyes of Puritan Presbyterians an additional sign of profanation. Soccer is mainly the prerogative of secondary modern intermediate schools. The integrated school is left either to dilute its limited resources by offering a selection of sports right across these choices, or to opt for the more common sport, soccer. Present policy at Lagan favours the sensible compromise of soccer and Gaelic football.

Back in the staffroom, the geography teacher, reflecting on the sensitivities necessary for teaching a mixed group of Catholics and Protestants, commented 'I feel I have gently to correct the pupil who instinctively refers to Ulster as "our province". When population control comes up on the syllabus, I ensure that contraception is mentioned but as only one method among others. We also had an interesting discussion on employment patterns in this area, when a pupil asked why so few Roman Catholics were employed by a particular firm.' It is evident that the teacher's own sensitivity is crucial. Lagan College is fortunate in attracting a high proportion of committed teachers who are willing to explore the conflicting aspects of their Irish heritage. The fact that nearly a third came to Lagan at the price of a drop in salary or status decisively shows their commitment to the ideal for which the school stands. One Catholic teacher wrote, 'Knowing that there would be no official approval from the Catholic Church, in going to Lagan College I felt I was going into a kind of exile.'

Severe pressure was experienced by the staff, especially during the autumn

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<sup>48</sup> This issue 'jeopardized if not ruptured' a relationship carefully built up over seven years between Unionist and SDLP councillors in Londonderry in 1980: cited in Christians in Ulster 1968-80, by Gallagher, E. and Worrall, S. (1982) OUP, p.222.

term 1984. The long delays in permission to erect mobile classrooms meant an emergency staff meeting in the last week of August to decide whether or not to cancel the new intake of 11 year olds due to arrive a week later. The only alternative was a 'crazy proposal' put to the staff: increase the class sizes by contracting the number of classes; rewrite the timetable; move the staff to a small boiler room to free another classroom; place two classes back to back in the Assembly hall; and commit staff to a lunch-duty every other day. Since the other option, of cancelling the intake, would have played directly into the hands of Lagan's opponents, the staff agreed to the proposal. Many teachers would have thrown in the sponge under that excessive strain. But Lagan's highly principled staff were led by a headteacher whose determination for Lagan to succeed was not easily undermined.

e) **Religious Education and Chaplaincy**

i) Religious Education

Religious education in an ecumenical school requires a particular degree of consideration when it is located in Northern Ireland. Lagan College published a statement of its aims in this field as being 'to meet the requirements not only of parents belonging to the main Christian Churches but also those of other faiths or none.' In its attempt to respond to individual needs, the school offered parents a choice for their child of attending Assembly and inter-denominational acts of worship or of withdrawing. Similarly they could withdraw their child from all R.E. classes, or ask for them to attend only shared classes in R.E. without receiving 'denominational care' from a chaplain.

The school's prospectus outlined three main elements in the R.E. programme:

- (a) the history and ideas of the major religious and philosophical traditions, intended for all pupils in the school;
- (b) the common Christian tradition;
- (c) church-specific, doctrinal, moral and ethical traditions and sacramental practice, intended for children of major denominations where desired.

The prospectus informed parents that they were free to withdraw their children from any of the three elements, but 'would be strongly encouraged to allow their children to attend at least the (a) element.' In practice none completely contracted out. In 1985 the percentage balance worked out at 42% Catholic, 41% Protestant, and 17% uncommitted denominationally. This last group, who tended to opt out of the 'denominational care', could be lapsed Catholics or children of mixed marriages. Some parents, like those in mixed marriages, felt that when it came to a two-choice denominational decision, they preferred to sit on the fence. At Lagan, unlike St . Bede's, that was (and is) a possible option. However, one Roman Catholic parent, mother of six, wife of a priest of the Church of Ireland, commented that the parents' decision to commit the children to the 'denominational care' of one particular chaplain was essential, for it reflected the position in the 'real' world and was important for the child in creating a sense of Christian identity. (In her own family, three children were brought up as Roman Catholics, three as Church of Ireland.)

Religious education in the first year (11 year olds) provided an overview of the structure of Christianity using the Schools Council publication: 'Religion in Britain Today'. Each chaplain from the various denominations (Church of

Ireland, Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist, and the Roman Catholic sister) was interviewed by each class, 'so we learn about all religions' (as the pupils put it during interviews). Visits to particular Churches were organised - to the RC Church in the autumn term, to a Protestant Church in the spring. Two Protestant girls commented on the Roman Catholic visit, 'The main differences were the coloured windows, confessional boxes, and the statues of Mary. They have Mass instead of an ordinary service.' A boy in the same class optimistically thought that 'learning about all religions' would help to solve some of Northern Ireland's problems and to reduce violence. In the second and third years, pupils followed the development of early Christian communities and major world religions for two periods a week.

ii) Denominational Care

A specific period was regularly set aside for 'denominational care' in small groups with a visiting chaplain. This provided a vital contact between the Churches and the school, ensuring that the line of communication with individual families was kept open.

A lively second year Catholic girl said that she enjoyed her sessions with Sister Clarke, but wished they were more frequent: she felt the 'only difference' between Protestants and Catholics was that 'Roman Catholics go on more about Mary.'

Lagan's statement on religious education underlines the purpose of 'denominational care'. The chaplains' job

'is pastoral rather than teaching, to build up a relationship with pupils of their own flock, to encourage and support them in growing in their own tradition as they progress through the College. The



Chaplains can help pupils to grow to be more committed and articulate members and representatives of their own denomination. For Catholic pupils this means the sort of experiences, liturgical worship, retreats etc., they would have in a maintained school, and for Protestant pupils pastoral care that would be complementary to Sunday School.'

In fact, the decision was made at Lagan's inception to appoint a chaplain for every religious denomination represented by a pupil in the school. 'In the first year this meant finding a Baptist chaplain for our only Baptist pupil!' recalled the deputy head.

The evident intention was to give reassurance to Lagan's parents that, far from finding a diluted religious education, their children would discover an enrichment through integration which would encourage personal commitment to a specific Church, not indifferentism. The suspicion is common among watchers of ecumenical communities that the end-product is a drift away from the particular devotion found in denominational religion into a vague, uncommitted, grey version of Christianity. In effect the opposite is more often the case. Somehow the juxtaposition of two communions compels individuals to analyse their own position and, from an anchorage in their own tradition, to develop a more open appreciation and understanding of other's views.

One founder parent commented: 'We spent as long trying to recruit chaplains as we did teaching staff.' The aim was to provide 'reassurance to parents that their children would not be proselytised; pastoral support for staff and pupils; advice on R.E. and the role of religion in the school; and to represent the goodwill of the Churches in an integrated school.' Particularly on the Catholic side, the chaplaincy issue was contentious. With no support from the

hierarchy,<sup>49</sup> those who volunteered to assist had to do so privately, mainly from religious orders, and even then were the object of criticism. One nun appointed to an R.E. post was forced by the bishop to resign. The Redemptorist priest who organised a mass for the Catholic parents was ordered to cease. Eventually in 1984 a retired nun, Sister Clarke, joined the chaplaincy team at Lagan and remained for eight years, during which time neither the bishop nor her community hindered her work, yet equally gave her no moral support. In her report on the Catholic Chaplaincy (February 1990), she described how she came to the school with an interest derived from her Corrymeela connections, enthusiasm for its ideals, 'yet with no precedent for my role as chaplain...My first few months were a challenging learning experience for me; coming from the Catholic system into an emerging integrated system, the focus on integration absorbed most of my time and attention.'

In the early days of Lagan, particular attention had to be given to the support of Roman Catholic parents. Protestant parents had no difficulty with the role of the Church in the child's religious formation through Sunday School. The Catholics on the other hand were used to the school taking a central role and needed reassurance through a series of evening meetings (e.g in May 1983)

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<sup>49</sup>Naturally the hierarchy did not and do not wish their own RC schools to be insufficiently enrolled. The 1983 code of canon law (226,2) declares 'the responsibility of Christian parents to ensure the Christian education of their children in accordance with the teaching of the Church.' A Catholic parent recalled his frustration when the then bishop Cahal Daly said that he could not possibly spare a priest for Lagan when he did not have sufficient for Catholic schools: 'But we weren't asking for a priest. We only wanted his support for a chaplain.'

that their child's Catholic identity would be safeguarded and strengthened<sup>50</sup>.

Staff too needed encouragement in clarifying Lagan's Christian ethos. At a residential weekend for all staff in Donegal in September 1985, they focused on how to create a school community 'animated by a spirit of liberty and charity based on the Gospel' (cited from (1965) Vatican II, Gravissimum Educationis, 8, ed. Flannery, p.732). They identified formal ways such as occasions for worship or prayer and religious symbols round the school, but also informal ways in the quality of relationships between staff, pupils, parents, and governors. These opportunities for staff to discuss openly and honestly were invaluable in establishing the school on a secure Christian foundation.

Lagan College had two heads of R.E., one Roman Catholic, the other Protestant. In distinction from the few Protestant schools that had incorporated 10-20% of Roman Catholics within their community, Lagan had to do more than 'accommodate' denominational differences. The challenge to an ecumenical school was to provide opportunities for sharing together religious experience and commitment in an atmosphere of trust, honesty, and humility. An integrated community could provide that opportunity for religious questions to come out into the open, for convictions and prejudices to be aired, so that commitment was not seen as an expression of hurtful rivalry but as a power for healing in a deeply polarised community.

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<sup>50</sup>A founder Roman Catholic parent recalled 'umpteenth discussions with Catholic parents to allay their fears, at which the Catholic deputy head was a tower of strength.'

#### **f) Community Relations**

A school's success is in some degree related to its reputation in the community beyond its walls. An 'ivory tower' policy is rarely the concomitant of success. For Lagan College it was not merely success but survival which was at stake.

From the first, Lagan was dependent on its supporters without whom it would never have got off the drawing board. Parents, politicians, clergy and laity, persuaded that the mould of segregation must be broken, found their individual voices coming together in the formation of the All Children Together Movement in 1974. Their pressure, as we have seen, was instrumental in getting the law changed to allow for shared schools. Their support for opening the school in 1981 evoked a response in the surrounding community: the Scouts offered their new centre as a site for the school's first term, and parents both ran the tuckshop and cleaned the floors. When new accommodation intended to be ready for September 1983 was incomplete, the director and staff of the Ulster Folk Museum offered their Education Centre as a base for the new intake of 77 pupils. The school's neighbours at Castlereagh, a factory and public playing fields, allowed generous use of their car parking areas, especially when builders were occupying much of the school site. Equipment for laboratories and workshops was forthcoming from local business and industry. Extensive media coverage stimulated an international interest in the school's development.

Lagan's early students were encouraged to go out into the community, to visit different churches and exhibitions, to participate in inter-school sports

competitions. By 1985 Lagan had twice won the senior section of a schools' history competition aimed at promoting community understanding and tolerance, organised by the Churches' Central Committee for Community Work in association with the Belfast Telegraph. Speakers from the All Children Together Movement encouraged cooperation across the religious divide at many meetings around the province. The Department of Education for Northern Ireland issued a circular on 'The Improvement of Community Relations: the contribution of schools' (1982/21), commending an area in which Lagan had clearly taken a lead.

i) Parental Liaison. On the school's behalf the most effective influence in the community was the parents. Many of them persevered in the early years at considerable cost to themselves. One working-class Roman Catholic mother had been anxious and hesitant over choosing a secondary school; when Lagan was given publicity, an open-minded Roman Catholic primary headteacher gave her the brochure saying that it might provide the answer. She took a job in a factory kitchen to earn a contribution to her son's education at the integrated school. 'We decided that no matter what else happened, Christopher was going to that school....My son should meet people from all walks of life.' (cited from Newsweek, 21 May 1984). One Protestant grandmother was apprehensive about the Roman Catholic influence on her grandson if he enrolled at Lagan. In his first year the mother persuaded the grandmother to help with school cleaning, and through contact with the spirit of the school, she became fully converted to the idea. The mother, while in sympathy with the aims of Lagan, came from a Presbyterian background; she was not herself a practising Christian. She

found Lagan's open-door policy to uncommitted parents a relief in the sectarian divide of Ulster's education system.

The sociologist and founder parent, Tony Spencer, commented in interview that parental involvement was important for three reasons: firstly, parents should not 'expose their children to the experience of integration without having that experience themselves'; secondly, 'the more interest and involvement the parents have in their children's education, the more effective the school will be as a formal socialising agency'; and thirdly, their involvement helps to spread 'the effects of integrated education throughout the human life-cycle', i.e. to more than one generation at a time.<sup>51</sup>

One brave couple with four children had a particular reason to support Lagan College. As a policeman, the Catholic father lived in constant danger. He sent his son to Lagan partly because he wanted coeducational mixed-ability teaching, but primarily as the only way to escape what he saw as the overwhelmingly republican influence of teachers, priests, and peer groups in Roman Catholic schools. He expressed the opinion in interview that 'Cardinal O'Fiaich favours the IRA, does nothing to support those priests who press for a more balanced line, and certainly has no control over the gunmen.'

Nevertheless, the parent in question was by no means uncritical of Lagan College. The crowded accommodation and the question-mark over the future

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<sup>51</sup> See also 'Arguments for an Integrated School System', chapter 7 in Osborne, R.D., Cormack R.J. and Miller R.L. (eds.) (1987) Education and Policy in Northern Ireland, Belfast: Policy Research Institute, p.109.

site of the school created a sense of insecurity even among parents who had lived 'hand-to-mouth' from 1981. In relation to religious education, he felt that the sessions with Sister Clarke allowed for insufficient catechetical instruction; and he was worried about his son studying Christianity with a Protestant teacher, who knew less about Roman Catholicism than some of his pupils.<sup>52</sup> (These reservations are comparable to those articulated by Catholic parents at Redhill, who are only gradually coming to terms with the recent emphasis on greater parental responsibility for children's catechesis.)

On one occasion an anxious Protestant mother telephoned another when her son failed to arrive home from school one afternoon. They decided to drive over to the republican New lodge district of Belfast to see if the boy was at the flat of his Roman Catholic friend. In the darkness they were stopped by a group of young men, hands in pockets, who allowed the boy's mother to check the flat while they stayed with the other by the car, lights out. The boy was later found back at home, but the experience was unforgettable for the mothers.

Support for parents, especially those under such pressures, has to be part of the school's role. Like other ecumenical ventures, Lagan College organised meetings or retreats for parents, such as the weekend held in September 1983 at Corrymeela, an interdenominational Christian centre near Ballycastle. Free discussion ranged from education to religion, from unemployment to worship, with the aim of 'fostering a community spirit of

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<sup>52</sup> His wife, however, had difficulty in distinguishing between the Virgin Birth (of Christ) and the Immaculate Conception (of the BVM), a problem no doubt not confined to Protestants.

integration beyond the school.' What was likely to be a long drawn-out process had at least started successfully.

ii) Relationships with other educational institutions. A matter of major importance for Lagan was to have good relations with its feeder primary schools. These were a vital link into the community, and there was a wide variety in their responses to Lagan's contacts. A founder member of staff, responsible for primary school liaison, saw her task as twofold: firstly to find out about prospective pupils as individuals, to assess how they would fit into the academic and religious balance of the classroom; secondly to put Lagan 'on the map' so far as the primary sector was concerned. Increasing numbers of Protestant primary schools asked for the College prospectus; but when there were more than forty 'feeder' schools to visit, a warm welcome could not be taken for granted. Among Roman Catholic primary schools there was overt hesitation. One head teacher commented in interview that her parents were free to do what they liked, but she felt that in sending children to Lagan they were making a mistake; another top form teacher confided that she was convinced Lagan was a step in the right direction but would get into trouble for saying so. Two Protestant primary schools replied to Lagan's request for a visit with the reply that it was not convenient; one principal felt that there was no need for a visit because written records could be sent on, although they never were.

On one visit to a Roman Catholic school run by Christian Brothers, the Lagan teacher was astonished to be greeted and blessed. The principal clearly took the view that the child in question would survive far better in a small school



like Lagan than in a tough secondary modern school (with RC affiliation). Another principal asked anxiously about religious education: would Lagan provide catechetical teaching? Was there provision for clergy to come into school?

Among primary schools there was concern that oversubscription meant that not all pupils could be assured places: this is a problem common to all institutions with a popular draw. The question whether there might be intimidation in the school was not. One young boy from the U.D.A. stronghold of a Dundonald estate on the outskirts of Belfast felt confident, however, that he had nothing to fear in being educated alongside Roman Catholics: 'I've got big brothers.'

One seemingly trivial matter became a significant mark of the confidence that Lagan College came to feel. Apprehensive about the reaction of the community, pupils during the first year in 1981 wore unmarked black blazers without distinctive insignia. By the autumn of 1984 their blazers sported a badge with the Latin motto 'Ut sint unum' (from John 17:21 — 'a motto in English would have been as divisive as one in Irish' said the deputy head), and a school scarf was introduced — black with bright red and yellow stripes. The children could take pride in their uniform.

#### 4. Lagan College: in its tenth year 1991-92

'We seek to free our children and future generations from the sad suspicion, from the cynicism of despair and of futile gloom, all too prevalent in Northern Ireland today and which has been imposed on us more forcibly in the last two decades.'

So spoke the first chairman of Governors, the Rt Hon. Basil McIvor, to a packed assembly hall at the opening of the new school building at Lisnabreeny on 25 October 1991. He paid credit to staff, children, parents, local community representatives, Church leaders, government ministers and officers, benefactors both national and international, without whom Lagan College could not have come into being and integrated education might have remained no more than a vision. In particular, he acknowledged the support of Dr Brian Mawhinney, then the Minister of State at the Northern Ireland Office, in his successful efforts to procure the £3.3 million from the Government towards the new building.

The principal, Terry Flanagan, wrote this in his newsletter to celebrate the occasion:

'The first part of the story has ended. The sceptics had been wrong. In the ten years between, there was much to be excited about, and to be discouraged about, and to hope for and to despair of ever achieving. One thing was certain during the years of split sites, inadequate accommodation, and lack of those things which other schools took for granted, and that was the certainty that the education of Catholic and Protestant children together by teachers from both sides of the community was the right thing to do, and that the Lagan College experiment would succeed.'

There can be little doubt that the College has 'succeeded' if judged by the criteria of pupil numbers and staff recruitment. To move from 28 pupils and 5 staff in 1981 to 740 pupils and 47 staff in 1991 is no insignificant achievement for a secondary school which, for its first few years, was wholly dependent on charity, competing for children in a province where parents

demand high standards of educational excellence. The second principal, Terry Flanagan took over the leadership of the College from Mrs Sheila Greenfield in September 1987 when already over 500 pupils were enrolled. In 1991 over a hundred applications had to be turned down for lack of space in the first year alone. The scheduled expansion to over a thousand boys and girls, including a full Sixth Form, is gradually to take place as new buildings 'come on stream', replacing the temporary huddled accommodation with humanities and business studies suites, science and technology laboratories, and a sports hall. The charitable trust meanwhile continues to raise funds to support two full-time chaplaincy appointments from 1992, and to finance the establishment of a worship centre in the school as part of the building programme.

Ten years after the creation of the school, the parameters of the discussion have hardly changed. Yet the seeing eye is not quite looking at the problems in the same way, and both circumstances and status have altered. In the following section we reconsider the political issues, the Churches' response; academic, curricular and the religious dimensions; and the relations with the surrounding community.

#### a) Political Issues

On 14 April 1987 the chairman of Lagan's governors said in a press statement: 'Lagan College is a native growth, and it is to be hoped that it will not lack the tending and watering which will bring it to full flower in as short a time as possible.'

In March 1988 the D.E.S. published a consultation document entitled 'Education in Northern Ireland: proposals for reform'. For the first time it acknowledged the government's support for schools which demonstrated a 'strong commitment to and progress towards full integration between Protestant and Roman Catholic pupils' (para. 57). It offered integrated schools (i.e. schools with at least 20-25% pupils in the minority communion) the specific option of grant-maintained status, enabling them to claim 100% capital funding from government. Additionally 'in grant-maintained integrated schools, given the Government's commitment to support and encourage integrated education, enrolments would not necessarily be constrained by the school's existing physical capacity, and normally it would be the intention to give the highest priority within the capital programme to projects involving the provision of necessary additional pupil places' (para. 62). This statement not only marked a clear policy change in the government's commitment to integrated education (moving from a 'hands-off' policy to one of specific support), but also singled out integrated schools for preferential treatment as regards expansion to meet demand.

These proposals seemed to be the answer to Lagan College's prayers over the previous decade. At last their efforts were being officially recognised and commended, and the opportunity to be relieved of the massive fund-raising

responsibilities of the previous years seemed welcome.

The immediate reality, however, turned out to be rather different. The proposals for 100% future funding came too late for Lagan and the strenuous toil of its supporters and, ironically, sabotaged much of the essential fundraising efforts for other integrated schools in the meantime. In practice they 'rolled a boulder in the path of Lagan College and probably other integrated schools. By holding out the promise of paying for Lagan's new school eventually, the motivation behind fundraising has been damaged.....the building fund has slowed to a trickle'. So wrote the Secretary to the Appeal in the Lagan College newsletter for June 1988.

The other 'sting in the tail' was the issue of control of an integrated school when it adopts grant-maintained status in order to attract 100% government funding. The repercussions of the change in status for diocesan education policy or parental control are considerable, and the Roman Catholic Church in Northern Ireland, like its counterpart in England and Wales, has already expressed concern about a policy which allows its schools to 'opt out', warning of the danger that 'opting out' might allow undesirable political factions to take control of their schools.

Integrated grant-maintained schools face a comparable dilemma. In consequence of 'opting out', the foundation and trustee governors of the school (who would be understood to have special responsibilities for keeping it true to its initial ideals) no longer hold the overall majority on the governing body where additional places are offered to elected parents. This gives parents, on a ballot as low as 20%, the power to change an integrated school into, for

example, a county school or a Roman Catholic school at some time in the future. The anxiety that the advocates of integrated education may have gained only a hollow victory is understandable.

Because of these considerations the future of integrated schooling in Northern Ireland is still far from clear. In a society already marked by suspicion, anxiety is hard to exorcise. However for Lagan's governors, the offer of 100% funding could not be turned down since it secured the financial position. The strong moral pressure on government ministers to provide capital funding for their 'flagship' integrated school was also strengthened when it became one of the first grant-maintained schools in the province. The governors' concern about the balance on the governing body and the ability of particular interest groups to exercise control has not in fact proved contentious. In a personal interview (October 1991), the chairman of governors commented that although the nine foundation governors were not the majority, the six elected parent governors had retained an appropriate denominational balance, and the six governors appointed by the government have hitherto been made after the consultation with the foundation, with three elected teacher governors making up the full complement of twenty-four. Lagan College's bursar also suggested that, although, as an opted out school, he could not expect support from the Local Education and Library Board, in practice he was able to seek helpful advice from its officers on a range of financial and administrative matters. As government policy becomes clearer in relation to the management of grant-maintained schools, no doubt this situation will need to be kept under review. It is not easy to draw out Leviathan with a hook.

The Churches' response to government policy on integrated status also has to be taken into account. The Roman Catholic authorities were incensed that this new sector received 100% funding while they still struggled to raise their statutory 15% funding to support their aided schools. The Council for Catholic Maintained Schools, in its response to the report of the Standing Advisory Committee on Human Rights (SACHR) in September 1991, wrote:

'The Council accepts that the statutory requirements of the Common Curriculum have resulted in a large number of new capital projects being urgently required in Catholic maintained schools. It endorses the (SACHR) view that 'the financial burden will fall on a community which suffers high levels of social deprivation.' In the interests of equality of opportunity, the Council calls on Government to consider this particular initiative as a special case and provide for it to be funded fully by Government and at no cost to the Catholic community.'

At the same time the Catholic authorities were keen to retain hard-won control of their schools and hesitant to follow the route of the Scottish hierarchy whose decisions to allow their schools to be 100% State funded since 1969 is thought to have resulted in a gradual erosion of the power of Catholic education authorities. (See the report in the Catholic Herald, 29 May 1992). Despite these fears and hesitations, in November 1992, after negotiations, an 'historic agreement' was reached that the government would provide 100% capital funding for Catholic schools in return for overall control of governing bodies, heralding 'a new era of trust' according to Bishop Edward Daly (T.E.S.) 13 November 1992). The bishop's confidence seemed founded on the fact that the parent governors would all be committed Catholics who would not wish to alter the school's ethos.

The Protestants too resented what they saw as preferential funding meted out to integrated schools, while other sectors had for years been knocking on the

Exchequer door (see Education, 8 November 1991.) The representative of the three main Protestant Churches (i.e. Methodist, Presbyterian, and Church of Ireland) speaking at a Seminar on integrated schools in 1991, also strongly objected to the exclusion of the Churches from a management role in integrated schools - a view he reiterated to his Church of Ireland Synod in June 1992 as follows:

‘I regard it as a blatant breach of historic and legally binding agreements. And I regard the Conservative administration policy in education, in this respect, as included in the 1989 Order, as being divisive, extremely insensitive and hurtful. I perceive such attitudes as being a slur on the track record of many church representatives.’

He went on to insist that ‘schools do not need to opt out of the controlled sector to become integrated’, praising local initiatives which welcome Roman Catholic pupils, teachers, and governors into controlled schools. Like the Catholic hierarchy, he welcomed the government’s encouragement for the National Curriculum cross-curricular themes of ‘Cultural Heritage’ and ‘Education for Mutual Understanding’ in all schools. He emphasized the need for equality of treatment for the controlled sector: if the Government was willing to fund a Council for Catholic Maintained Schools, and the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education, ‘the time is overdue for a body to provide a similar focus for controlled schools.’ It seems therefore that the Government’s explicit endorsement of integrated education has ruffled the feathers of both Protestant and Catholic Churches, whose reaction is to regard it as a ‘cuckoo in the nest’.

A further important issue is raised by the Government’s formal recognition of grant-maintained integrated status : is an integrated school by definition one that describes itself as Christian or religious? or might the Government



encourage in the future secular integrated schools? There is already public debate about the religious nature of an integrated school<sup>53</sup>. Lagan College goes out of its way to acknowledge religious diversity and is very explicitly Christian - though at the same time it 'welcomes on an equal footing, pupils of religions other than Christianity, and those who come from homes which do not subscribe to a religious view of life' (cited from the 1990 prospectus)<sup>54</sup> and therefore offers an attractive refuge for parents in mixed marriages or where religious allegiance has been rejected, whether out of intellectual conviction or even from disgust at religious sectarianism and its consequences. Some other integrated schools, however, which would also consider themselves Christian, tend to play down the importance of religion, no doubt because of its divisive potentialities. This was recognised by the Church of Ireland General Synod's Education spokesman, who commented to his local synod in June 1992:

'Some schools do attempt to engage with the realities of both main religious traditions in Ireland, whilst the attitude of others would indicate a more secular approach - a virtual 'plague on both your houses' attitude towards the two Christian traditions.'

However, in a personal interview (March 1992) the principal of one school, identified as being in the second category, commented:

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<sup>53</sup>At the Education and Library Board's conference in October 1989, reported in Education (27 October 1989), a Protestant spokesman declared: 'The creeping secularization implied in the proposed grant-maintained integrated status is no cure for sectarianism.'

<sup>54</sup>Note that this admissions criterion is not shared by St. Bede's Redhill.

‘Northern Ireland is not ready for a secular school; it won’t be for twenty years. Religion is built into the culture..... Yet I don’t believe for one second that the problem is religious. No one has ever been shot because of their views on Transubstantiation....The problem between Catholics and Protestants is not that they do not understand each other’s theology. It is because they are afraid of each other. It is all about perception. If people feel threatened, they will attack or run away.’

He acknowledged that there may be different models of an integrated school: if people saw Lagan as more overtly Christian than his school, so be it. He preferred to emphasise the importance of the hidden curriculum in developing pupil’s own self-esteem, thereby increasing their understanding and respect for each other.

Seamus Dunn of the Centre for the Study of Conflict at the University of Ulster (Coleraine) discussed these issues:

‘All the existing planned integrated schools describe themselves as Christian schools in spite of the fact that, in most of them, there are parents who do not describe themselves as Christians. It is clear that the emphasis on the Christian nature of the schools arises out of the deep (Christian) religious convictions of those involved. But there is also the view that, since most people in the Northern Ireland culture define themselves in Christian terms, there would be general reluctance to support a secular school and even outright opposition to it.’ Oxford Review of Education (1989) vol. 15, no.2.

Dunn even suggested that here the old joke about people defining themselves as Catholic atheists or Protestant atheists holds true. He continued,

‘The aspiration that all religions be cherished should be seen alongside the view that the schools are nonetheless Christian schools. In Northern Ireland, where the numbers of non-Christian religions are small, this is uncontentious because there is no threat.’

However, he speculated that a school dominated by a secular ethos, insofar as the majority of its pupils and staff would be atheist or agnostic, might have little to contribute to improving community relations for the reason that it would not effectively be an integrated school: the discussion of these matters

is just beginning.

This issue has also been addressed by the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education. In answer to the 'misconception' that 'integration is creeping secularization', the Chief Executive commented: 'All integrated schools are based on Christian foundations.' At the Cambridge joint schools conference in June 1992 she confirmed that NICIE's approach to religion, as declared in its published Statement of Principles, is Christian rather than secular and that, since the Government required integrated schools to have an appropriate balance of Protestants and Catholics, they must by definition be 'ecumenical'. The principal of Lagan College questioned, however, whether it is possible for them to be truly 'ecumenical' as long as the Churches refused to become involved. It would be ironic if the Churches, in their single-minded determination to defend their own denominationally oriented schools in preference to the integrated Christian institutions, found that by their absence the integrated sector became dominated by secular interests and Government control. Let us now consider the Churches' response to Lagan as an integrated school.

#### **b) The Churches' Response**

In the ten years since Lagan College began, the position of the Churches has not radically shifted. Both Catholic and Protestant Church spokesmen continue to insist that the maintained and controlled sectors respectively are and will remain their prior concern. Yet there have been important if subtle changes of emphasis in the Churches' response to the development of integrated education.

There seem to be three issues on which the Catholic and Protestant leaders agree: they claim that their own single-denominational schools encourage integration; they insist on the importance of control and influence in their schools; yet they respect the right of parents to choose the school which best suits their child. We may briefly consider each of these claims.

First, the Protestants have always been in the position to claim that integrated schools are unnecessary since their controlled schools are open to all, welcoming Catholics as much as anyone else; but they acknowledge that 'de facto' their ethos is predominantly pan-Protestant (the opinion of the education spokesman of the Irish Council of Churches). The Catholics, on the other hand, have argued that far from being divisive, their schools care about 'reconciliation and love in our community'; they have an obligation to encourage an 'ecumenical spirit with sister schools of different traditions', to implement and extend inter-school cooperation, and to develop projects for peace and mutual understanding.<sup>55</sup> What these two viewpoints do not take into account, many would say, is the inherent sectarianism of a segregated system in Northern Ireland, evidenced in the researches of Darby, Dunn, Murray, and others; such a system cannot acknowledge the enrichment of diversity nor accept another tradition on equal terms. The function of religious separation is to make the most characteristic features of Catholicism and Protestantism in Northern Ireland a series of negations of the alternative.

Secondly, both confessions argue that they must have control of their schools.

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<sup>55</sup>cf. Loughran, G., 'The Rationale of Catholic Education' in Education and Policy in Northern Ireland, Osborne, R.D., Cormack, R.J., Miller, R.L. (eds.) (1987), Belfast: Policy Research Institute.

The Protestants have kept 'transferors' rights' on the governing bodies of controlled schools, and are arguing with the Government to allow the establishment of a Council for Controlled Schools, parallel to the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools set up in 1989. (As noted earlier, the point surfaced in the General Synod debates of the Church of Ireland in May 1992.) They tend to be more suspicious of the 'creeping Irishness' implied by the Education for Mutual Understanding (EMU) initiative, for example, since it might undermine their emphasis on preserving a British identity. This observation appeared confirmed when the 'Religion in Ireland' project was being given a trial at Lagan College: the Protestant children were made more anxious than the Catholics when the work disclosed that the differences between the denominations were less than they had been brought up to believe (personal interview with project leader, October 1991). It has even been argued, for example by Duncan Morrow, that Protestants are less threatened by integrated education than by EMU because integrated education 'is portrayed as the end of control over education by the Catholic Church and the very public objections of the Catholic hierarchy to integrated education have encouraged this view'<sup>56</sup>.

Canon Houston McKelvey of the Church of Ireland has regretted that a consequence of the opposition of the Catholic Church to integration has been that the government has gone for grant-maintained status, so that now no Church has a controlling influence in the integrated schools. Such an erosion of power must be unwelcome.

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<sup>56</sup> Tablet, 16 February 1991

The third issue on which the Churches agree is that of parental choice. As has been noted, the government's Parents' Charter and other initiatives to enhance parental choice in education have been acknowledged by both Protestants and Catholics but only warily, again because of the implicit threat to Church control in education. Once however they have agreed the principle, it can be applied as much to the rationale for developing integrated schools as it can for preserving segregated ones. Catholics argue that the parents' decision to have their child educated in a Catholic school is a religious decision based on 'a theocentric view of reality' (G. Loughran, 1987, op. cit.), though probably few parents would think of expressing it in such terms, and in any event it is hardly distinctive of Catholicism. Cardinal Daly when interviewed for Fortnight magazine remarked (13 September 1991):

'The very high proportion of Roman Catholics who deliberately and freely choose Catholic Schools for their children is a very effective way of showing that this is what they believe is in their circumstances the best form of education, which they themselves desire in exercise of their parental choice. Others make a different choice - that's fine. I'm not crusading against integrated education. I am a fervent believer in the value of Catholic education.'

These comments certainly reflect a change, even if only a hesitant and reluctant one, from Cardinal Daly's marked disapproval of 1984. However, the right of Catholic parents to choose integrated education remains difficult, since they are officially choosing also to take on 'personal responsibility for their child's religious formation', because (to quote Mgr McCaughan, director of the Council of Catholic Maintained Schools) 'they are

opting out of a full Catholic education'.<sup>57</sup> The judgement that only a Catholic school can provide Catholic education is shared by Bishop Patrick Walsh of Down and Connor, but he observed that parish support for integrated schools was becoming an increasing priority. Unlike the experience of the Lagan pupils in early days, he hoped that his parish priests would take seriously their bishop's insistence (e.g. at the priests' conference in spring 1992) that children in integrated schools needed more support in Catholic formation, not less.

Lagan's principal reported that Bishop Walsh had given permission for a Jesuit priest to assist in a day conference for fourth year pupils at the College in June 1992. Nevertheless the bishop refused to give his approval to the appointment of a Passionist father as Lagan's Catholic chaplain in September 1992, in spite of the fact that the man concerned had already taken up the post with the knowledge of his superiors: the bishop considered that it was contrary to Church policy to appoint a priest to the post, although he was prepared to consider a non-ordained religious<sup>58</sup>. Have the days passed when Lagan parents in his diocese could describe themselves as 'left in a spiritual no man's land'? It is too early to speculate whether or not the principles of reconciliation and ecumenical spirit advocated within Catholic schools might be equally applicable outside them.

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<sup>57</sup> See Mary Kenny in The Tablet, 10 February 1990:

'the Roman Catholic Church has embarked upon a propaganda exercise to promote Catholic schools specifically and, in some cases, to be uncooperative in administering catechism, First Communion or Confirmation classes to Catholic children in integrated schools'.

<sup>58</sup>The Passionist Order were willing to allow the chaplain to remain at Lagan for the academic year 1992-3.

The Churches still face a number of difficulties in their response to integrated schools like Lagan. Protestant ambivalence may be explained by three factors. First, Protestants do not speak with one voice. On policy there are large disagreements. For example, the non-sectarian Alliance party openly supports integration, while the Official Unionists would prefer schools to reinforce 'the British dimension'. A Church of Ireland spokesman privately observed that when the Church of Ireland was trying to encourage ecumenical cooperation with Roman Catholics, it was 'unhelpful if the Unionists publicly voiced strong anti-Catholic opinions'. Secondly, Protestant ministers are generally less at home in schools than their Catholic counterparts. Their theology of conversion seems more appropriate in the context of Sunday schools (though probably only about 17% of children attend these) than in the pan-Protestant culture of controlled schools, let alone integrated schools. Thirdly, it is observed that the Protestant school is closely linked with its own local community in a way the integrated school cannot be because of its wider catchment area. (The same would apply, of course, to Catholic schools in Catholic areas, but the point seems not to be noted so much by Catholics.) Canon McKelvey suggested that integration which arises naturally by consent (e.g. when a local Church of Ireland school chooses to have a Catholic on the governing body to represent the interests of the increasing numbers of Catholics moving into the area) is superior to that 'imposed by any government'. The 'sensitive local negotiations' which led to the establishment of the first integrated controlled school (Brownlow) offered a case in point.<sup>59</sup> Bishop Gordon McMullan, Anglican Bishop of Down

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<sup>59</sup> His optimism was premature: the local board representative governors (Protestants) were forced to resign in July 1992 for not supporting integrated status.



and Dromore, noting Lagan's progress, nevertheless felt that the school's public relations had concentrated more on the media than on the local community and its people: 'it must also guard against being isolated, a problem exacerbated by its geographical position in the more rural area beyond South Belfast' (personal interview, October 1991). By contrast, Colin Irwin's 1991 research noted advantage in its site beyond Belfast's main residential area, where the College was less likely to draw pupils from a particular community 'with a social class or sectarian bias' (p.15).

The Catholic Church's response to integrated education has tended to be more officially clear cut. Although there are still priests who put undue pressure on parents,<sup>60</sup> many now feel that the priority is to make Catholic schools attractive enough both in terms of academic excellence and in Catholic nurture so as to make such pressure unnecessary. This links with, the conviction that Catholic schools are the only choice for dutiful Catholic parents because religious education must permeate every aspect of school life. Bishop Walsh, in a personal interview (March 1992), commented that it is not enough to have separate RE on the timetable, even if it is taught by Catholic teachers, since this separatist model does not recognise the implicit formation of children through the school's pervasive Catholic ethos. This view is also found in Loughran's article of 1987 on 'The Rationale of

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<sup>60</sup> The depth of feeling can be sensed in the overstated rhetoric of Fr Denis Faul at Maynooth (28 February 1989): 'Catholics who do not send their children to Catholic schools inflict a grievous wound on the children by depriving them of a uniquely precious gift - an education with a 2000 year old perspective on religion. These parents endanger their faith and they are helping to betray the faith of the coming generations by failing to support Catholic schools now. Who gave them leave to opt out of the Catholic community for selfish or snobbish reasons? Their duty is to support Catholic education and strengthen it for the coming generations. This is the only way they can fulfil the promise given in Baptism.'

Catholic Education' : 'There is no catechism which can make a school into a Catholic school. It is rather the existence of a Catholic school which makes catechesis possible'.

One problem with this is that it may presuppose a rather more monolithically Catholic society than actually prevails in modern Ireland. A Catholic teacher, interviewed in October 1991, who had worked in Belfast Catholic schools for many years even considered the Bishop's view to be 'fiction': if it was once true of the hidden curriculum, 'it did not exist any more, because the religious orders were less and less involved in education', he argued. However, even if this is too pessimistic, a second question is how can we know that this Catholic ethos may not also be present in integrated schools? Bishop Walsh conceded that it was difficult to define; but he would expect to recognise it by the presence of statues or crucifixes.<sup>61</sup> However, he had never visited an integrated school to judge for himself; he felt he already knew that it could not exist there (personal interview, March 1992). A third - and from an ecumenical point of view the most significant - question is whether an integrated school may not create a genuinely Christian ethos in which the different denominations would participate equally. Another difficulty arises from the traditional role of the Catholic priest in schools. Unlike Protestant ministers in relation to controlled schools, priests are regular visitors to Catholic schools. Their theology of nurture is naturally at home in the school setting where every teacher is viewed as a catechist. The deputy director of the Council of Catholic Maintained Schools admitted,

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<sup>61</sup> Note that Christian symbols were deemed important at St. Bede's Redhill in the 1991 refurbishment and in Dominic Murray's 1983 research in Ulster schools.

however, that Catholic priests are unaware what catechetical programme is being taught at integrated schools like Lagan College, nor are they encouraged to find out. He went further in insisting that it would be 'an act of disbelief' for them to go into an integrated school since 'we cannot become involved in something over which we have no control or authority.' If a visit did take place, the Catholic priest would not be there as of right as he would be in a Catholic school. Nor could he indicate to Roman Catholics that integrated schools might be as good as Catholic ones (personal interview, October 1991). A related issue was highlighted by Mgr. Bartley on Ulster Television (22 January 1989): Catholic schools put central emphasis on the Mass, prayers to Mary, and preparation for the sacraments. 'This cannot be done adequately in a mixed school without offending the religious sensibilities of other Christians.'

Thirdly, even if they wanted to, Catholic schools could never become partners in joint ecumenical schools since there are no Protestant Church schools with which to amalgamate, unlike the situation in England where the Catholic and Anglican Churches both retain their own schools. Bishop Walsh explained that this was a further reason why Catholics felt uneasy about integrated education, because the Church was not involved from the start. However, he acknowledged in a personal interview that Catholic opposition had forced Lagan to start as a 'new' school without the Churches' support, even if it had wanted it.

As we have already noted, there is some paradox here, namely that a ground for Catholic opposition to Lagan is that in the College's conception and birth the official Catholic church was absent, when it is also conceded that that

absence was a reflection of Catholic opposition 'ab initio'.

In legal terms it is hard to refute the claim that the only constituted Church schools in Northern Ireland are Catholic. But in moral terms the claim is less plausible. Lagan College's founding purpose contains the aspiration to be truly 'ecumenical' and the school aims to draw on the support of all the Churches from which its pupils come, the Catholic Church no less than the others.

### c) Academic issues

Ensuring that Lagan College's policy of an 'all ability pupil intake' allows each child to fulfil its potential is perhaps of even greater importance ten years on than it was at the start. The difficulty in the early days was to establish the school's reputation for academic success with children who for the most part had failed the 11+. In her newsletter of March 1987, Sheila Greenfield was able to report that Lagan's first public examination cohort in 1986 had acquitted itself well: 'No pupil left school without some examination success. 93% achieved five or more CSE passes, 67% achieved an additional GCE Certificate, and 29% achieved GCE passes or CSE 1 equivalents in four or more subjects. (It is worth noting that only 5% were given an A grading in the selection test aged 11.)'

As parental confidence increased, so more bright children whose parents were committed to both integrated and comprehensive education were enrolled. As one third year girl's parents commented in an interview in October 1991, Lagan brought together these two ideals for their daughter's education. However, when she passed 11+, their friends and grandparents

expressed incredulity at the choice of Lagan College. The parents had to cope with local prejudice, e.g. that 'at Lagan College their daughter would come into contact with working-class children'; or the primary school headteacher who advertised details of every high school's Open Day except Lagan's<sup>62</sup>. Parents with such personal commitment to integrated education were also likely to be keen to ensure that their daughter was offered every educational opportunity. Like her mother who has a first class degree in languages, the girl was hoping to study two modern languages in her third year. However, when she was offered only Irish (alongside French) instead of Spanish because of a timetabling problem, the parents insisted: 'We turned down a grammar school place to send her to Lagan; she must be offered two languages as she would be at a grammar school.' Within two days Spanish was reinstated for the third year pupils.

The present principal (interviewed in 1992) is adamant that 11+ selection creates a separate but no less divisive fault line than that created by culture, religion, and politics<sup>63</sup>. In Northern Ireland, as is recognised by the Fair Employment Agency, too high a proportion of children leave school with no qualifications. Lagan aims to bring children together from all backgrounds and all classes, but has to achieve good examination results if it is to attract the full cross-section of parents. The principal acknowledged: 'It may be the best known school in Northern Ireland, but it is not yet the best.' Looking

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<sup>62</sup>Similar experiences were reported in (1992) 'Integrated Education: The Views of Parents', a survey conducted by McEwan, A., Salters, J. and M., Agnew, U., for Queen's University, Belfast.

<sup>63</sup>see also Auger, E.A. (1981) 'In Search of Political Stability: a comparative study of New Brunswick and Northern Ireland'. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.

forward to the next ten years, he identified the importance of clarifying the implications of an all-ability school. Public perception was that it meant mixed ability teaching; but increasingly Lagan staff felt that 'setting by ability' would be more appropriate e.g. in languages and mathematics. Although the earlier divisiveness of GCE and CSE had been removed by the arrival of the common 16+ examination, he saw real dangers for all ability schools if, as in Great Britain, the government were to allow grant-maintained schools to adopt grammar school status. He expressed apprehension that the new generation of Lagan parents and governors might be pressurised into reassessing the admissions criteria and selecting on grounds of pupil ability (whether by the 11+ or the key stage 2 assessment tests).

Equally the government's policy on open enrolment may allow grammar schools, faced with falling rolls or under-utilized capacity, to offer places to more children who previously would have failed 11+. It was estimated in 1988 that the percentage of pupils in grammar schools in Ulster was likely to rise from 27% to 35%<sup>64</sup>, a prognosis that could weaken Lagan's ability to attract more 11+ qualifiers. The decision in 1992 to open a new Catholic grammar school in Belfast may add to the pressures.

However, Lagan's governors are determined, as the 1991 and 1992 admission policies state in Criterion 3, that 'the College will apply its admissions criteria in such a way as to preserve its all-ability nature'. Their commitment to this principle received a serious setback in 1992 when

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<sup>64</sup>Teachers' Weekly, June 1988.

the Department for Education in Northern Ireland insisted that the mechanism for applying Criterion 3 be removed; the High Court judge upheld the decision and ruled that only grammar schools in Northern Ireland may use academic criteria under the 1989 Order. Trying to ensure a pupil intake across the whole ability spectrum has not proved easy.

Two Sixth Form students quoted in the 1992 prospectus exemplify Lagan's academic achievement. 'At Lagan College we're taught that everyone has the ability to succeed, if they're given the opportunity', commented one boy. 'Even though I'd failed in the 11+, I was encouraged all the way and have just finished my GCSEs: 2 As, 3Bs, and 2Cs.' A Sixth Form girl wrote: 'I failed my 11+, but that wasn't an obstacle for me at Lagan College. I got good GCSE results: 5As, 1B, 2Cs, and I'm now completing my I.B. studies<sup>65</sup> and planning to go to university.' If Lagan can boast such heartening results with these pupils, its success with a broader range of ability should enable it to enhance its future reputation and standing.

#### **d) Curriculum Issues**

The Northern Ireland Curriculum comes into force gradually over the next few years, following the Education Reform Order 1989. It provides for a framework of six Areas of Study (English, Mathematics, Science, Technology, Environment and Society, Creative and Expressive Studies, and Language Studies), within which the 'Contributory Subjects' cover similar ground to the core and foundation subjects of the National Curriculum. In addition, there are cross-curricular themes, such as Cultural Heritage and Education

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<sup>65</sup> That is, the International Baccalaureate.

for Mutual Understanding, which are specific to Northern Ireland, as are modifications (e.g. in English) for Irish-medium schools.

This new common curriculum means that the historic divergence in curriculum structure as reflected in segregated Protestant and Catholic schools is gradually being diminished. The agreements in common syllabuses for history and religious education encourage new thinking. Thus the challenges met by Lagan in its early years to devise a common curriculum for its own pupils may show it to have been a leading force in the field, and now therefore in a position to help other schools in this area.

The establishment of post-16 provision in 1987 has been, without doubt, the most important decision on the curriculum made by the governors in Lagan's later years. Although the first sixteen pupils to stay on after the fifth year followed only one-year 'O' level-resit and work preparation courses, the College stated as early as 1986 that it planned to introduce A level study as soon as numbers became viable. This, as the principal's newsletter of June 1986 pointed out, would also give some pupils a second chance of improving their academic qualifications if they needed to do so.

However, if Lagan was to attract a truly all-ability intake, it had to devise a curriculum which could satisfy parents and pupil's higher academic aspirations, particularly in the context of Northern Ireland where the grammar schools with reason take pride in advertising their Oxbridge successes. There seemed little chance of Lagan being able to compete in the short term in this demanding A level market place.



At the same time, the British government was also reviewing its post-16 curriculum. The 1988 Higginson Report's attempt to break out of the straitjacket of 2-3 A level specialisms and to broaden the post-16 framework was widely welcomed in educational circles, although Mrs Thatcher's advisers eventually decided to pursue the development of the A level 'gold standard', complemented by AS levels and vocational diplomas, rejecting the specific recommendations of the Higginson committee.

Meanwhile the European dimension was becoming increasingly important as EEC funding began to make an impact in both the Republic and Northern Ireland.<sup>66</sup> The European Studies Project,<sup>67</sup> within the cross-curricular theme of Education for Mutual Understanding, was introduced into all Northern Ireland schools to encourage a 'new common identity' for Ulster people as Europeans beyond the sectarian divide. The Staff Inspector responsible for EMU commented in a paper, 'EMU and the Challenge of a New Europe' (given to the DENI Summer School conference in August 1990), 'It is in this multicultural, cooperative Europe that our young people will live, work, travel and settle.' The EEC's role in breaking down barriers and enhancing cooperation between member countries may be even more significant in Northern Ireland than elsewhere. As Moxon-Browne pointed out in 1983, 'In the Anglo-Irish context, any mitigation of the stark dilemma for Ulstermen of choosing to be either of one nation or the other, must be

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<sup>66</sup>See Wickham, A. (1981) 'National Education Systems and the International Context: the Case of Ireland' in Education and the State vol. 1, Open University, pp. 321-333

<sup>67</sup>The Northern Ireland Curriculum Council is to review this theme of European Awareness to advise whether it should be made statutory (cf. NICC Development Plan, February 1992)

welcomed.<sup>68</sup>

In its need to establish academic credibility and to obviate the invidious comparisons with established grammar school sixth forms, Lagan College decided to explore the avenue of the International Baccalaureate. The 1990 prospectus stated:

‘In September 1990 the College will begin teaching the International Baccalaureate, a two year university entrance course....the curriculum of the I.B. has a number of unique factors which makes it a more balanced and coherent course of study than A level’.

Although accepted by all higher education institutions as equivalent to A level for admission purposes,<sup>69</sup> the IB is generally used by colleges with a particular international dimension. In some degree Lagan had already established extensive European and American links through the major fund-raising campaign of Sister Anna. Enhancing those links with school exchanges in Spain and Belgium seemed a natural progression. Again, to require the continuation of a modern European language, mandatory for all I.B. students as 1992 approached, seemed wholly appropriate.

The 1992 prospectus also stressed Lagan’s involvement in a group of twelve schools representing each country in the European Community, for which it would be host in 1994:

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68 Moxon-Browne, E. (1983) ‘Nation, Class and Creed in Northern Ireland’ Aldershot: Gower, p.165.

69In July 1992 the principal commented: ‘Higher education was no problem at all, with one or two minor exceptions, (which we managed to sort out), where people did not really understand the IB procedures and made ridiculous offers like 37 points.’

‘Through increased contact with continental Europe they will be able to see the positive values of their own community within the wider context of Europe’.

How far the IB course has been successful is difficult to evaluate at this early stage.<sup>70</sup> There is little doubt that it is academically demanding and that continuing with subjects at the Higher Level and at the Subsidiary Level places great pressure on a number of students: some (14 in 1992) prefer to transfer to college for traditional ‘A’ levels. The requirement to include a balance of arts and science subjects may be commended (see Education, 23 November 1990); but it makes it difficult for those who find themselves more capable in one area than the other.

In addition, as the one-year Sixth curriculum is being restructured across Britain (e.g. with new BTEC, RSA and CGLI courses), so Lagan is planning to seize the opportunity to offer a broader curriculum to students of all ability beyond GCSE (e.g. offering a RSA GNVQ level 2 in Business and Finance). This should encourage more students to continue their studies into Lagan’s Sixth Form.

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<sup>70</sup>It recruited 25 students in 1990, 23 in 1991 and 21 in 1992. They are required to take three subjects at Higher and three at Subsidiary Level, complemented by a philosophy course, a research project of 5,000 words and a ‘Creative, Active or Service’ activity (such as sport, music or community service). Of the 22 students who finally entered the examinations in May 1992, 68% progressed to higher education. The lower course enrolment figures are caused by more selective recruitment now the demands of the I.B. are fully appreciated.

The HMI report, reviewed in the T.E.S. (25 January 1991), commented that, in comparison with ‘A’ Levels, ‘there was greater opportunity and therefore better achievement in independent research and originality’ and I.B. students attained ‘higher standards in oral skills’ than their ‘A’ level counterparts.

**e) Religious Education and Chaplaincy**

**i) Religious Education:**

The 1990 Prospectus declares:

‘The broad aims of Religious Education at Lagan College are to help pupils from diverse religious traditions, and from none, to reflect upon the meaning of human existence; to develop knowledge, understanding, and tolerance of the beliefs of others; and to understand more fully their own religious tradition.’

Ten years on, the key principles of Lagan’s RE programme have changed little. The joint heads of RE, one Protestant (currently Presbyterian) and one Catholic, continue the tradition of a common academic RE syllabus taught to mixed classes, complemented by the denominational care, for which the chaplains are normally responsible.

The common syllabus, originally devised on the St. Bede’s Redhill model, for the first year pupils includes an introduction to the Christian community as seen in the Bible and the lives of individuals, the main Christian festivals, and the life of Jesus; it also involves a carefully planned visit to three different churches, Roman Catholic, Church of Ireland, and Baptist/Presbyterian/Methodist/or non-subscribing Presbyterian.

The Catholic teacher at an interview in June 1992 commented that, when he visited the Presbyterian church with his mixed class, some of the children were understandably more at home than he was, but were keen to point things out to him. By contrast, he confessed he found it all too easy to slip into Catholic language in discussing the visit to the Catholic Church. When he asked his class to describe the tabernacle, the Protestant children looked mystified: what was self-evident to him was not to them. Clearly these

visits were a learning experience for both teacher and pupils.

The RE programme for the second and third years includes Church history and 'ethical and moral life issues' (particularly linked with the Ten Commandments) and the study of world religions (e.g. Islam in the second year and Judaism in the third year course). All pupils follow the GCSE syllabus leading to the qualification in Religious Studies at the end of the fifth year. Although parents are reminded of their legal right of withdrawal, 'the College believes that understanding different religious beliefs and practices is a vital component of Integrated Education and would strongly encourage parents not to withdraw their children.' (1990 prospectus). The 1992 survey of parents' views on integrated education showed that 82% approved of their children's R.E. programme: 'They should remain good Catholics or good Protestants but respect each other's religion and culture'.<sup>71</sup>

The previous Catholic Head of RE, recently seconded to the first controlled school to become integrated in order to develop the RE programme along more inter-denominational lines, was reported in a Church Times interview (28 June 1991): 'Teenagers have very little interest in doctrinal issues - like young people everywhere, they are more concerned with moral questions, how to behave.' That issues of religious doctrine tend to be more the concern of parents than children is also reflected in the views of his Protestant counterpart at Lagan who felt, in common with many RE teachers, that it was 'difficult enough interesting young people to take RE as a serious subject'; she had to be sensitive to the children's development, since (in common with

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<sup>71</sup>McEwan et al. (1992) op. cit.

single denominational schools) pupils generally felt less receptive to specific Church teaching as they grew older.

An important development was the publication, on 26 June 1992, of the new common core syllabus in Religious Education, agreed after some two years' work by representatives of the four main Churches (Roman Catholic, Presbyterian, Church of Ireland, and Methodist). In his speech to General Synod on 19 May 1992, Archbishop Robin Eames described the Churches' agreement as 'a moment of historic change' - a not overstated view if one bears in mind the divisive entrenchment caused by the issue of religious education earlier in this century. In a personal interview in June 1992 he further commented: 'It is remarkable how we have been able to trust each other in producing the syllabus. It shows a new respect for the other traditions - a major step forward.'

The Synod's Education Adviser explained in June 1992: The syllabus

'acknowledges the unavoidable facts that Roman Catholic schools deliver RE within a confessional framework... whereas RE in a controlled school must be Bible-based and not distinctive of any denomination. I believe the core programme in RE permits both types of schools to meet with integrity the specifications of the curriculum and the expectations of the communities served by these schools.'

While accepting the recommendations for additional guidance on RE for children with special needs and specific internal assessment of pupil progress, the government also wished to advocate the inclusion of the study of world religions, so that 'young people should be led to view the beliefs of others with tolerance, understanding, and respect.' This new syllabus is being introduced for pupils in the first year of the first three key stages from September 1993 and for the first year of key stage 4 from September 1994,

to allow time for the preparation by Northern Ireland Secondary Examinations and Assessment Council of a new GCSE syllabus.

The impact of this common core RE syllabus on Lagan's RE programme is yet to be assessed, but clearly many of its principal elements are already in place. The effect of having a syllabus agreed by all the Churches can only enhance Lagan's confidence in providing appropriate RE to mixed classes of children from all the denominations. The principal, himself an R.E. teacher, commented that, although the common core syllabus seemed more like a step backwards in educational terms because of its apparent repetitiveness and narrow focus on the Christian faith, in ecumenical terms it was a real step forward (personal letter September 1992).

ii) Denominational Care. Ten years on, one area which is undergoing a radical rethink is that of denominational care, particularly in respect of the role of the College chaplains. The work of the six honorary chaplains<sup>72</sup> on a part-time basis since 1981 was complemented by the appointment of two full-time chaplains in September 1992, one Roman Catholic, the other Protestant. The 1992 prospectus reported that 'the size of the College and the demands on the time of these (honorary) chaplains has led the Governors to the decision.' How has the chaplains' role evolved to this point?

The 1990 prospectus included statements from both Protestant chaplains and the Roman Catholic chaplain which illustrated the different approaches. The first specified,

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<sup>72</sup> Baptist, Church of Ireland, Presbyterian, Methodist, non-subscribing Presbyterian, Roman Catholic.

'Our aim is to develop an understanding of our own denomination and the strengths and weaknesses of ALL traditions in an imperfect world .... The role of the chaplains is to be at hand and develop as a friend and confidant so the issues which concern the pupils can be discussed in a way not possible within a classroom situation.'

The Catholic statement explained that

'the emphasis in the chaplain groups is on caring about our faith. What is specifically Catholic is taught under the following broad headings: Human Life, Sacraments, Liturgical year, Honouring Mary, Praying for the Dead....A lively Catholic presence in Lagan College is not a sign of division, but a measure of understanding and enjoying who we are as Catholics, in order to understand those who are affiliated to other Churches and so learn to live in harmony and freedom.'

The arrangements by which chaplains had contact with their respective pupils meant that the children were withdrawn in small groups from RE classes on a rota system. In practice, only the Roman Catholic chaplain, Sister Clarke, developed a formal arrangement by which each Catholic pupil met her once a fortnight for one class period. In 1984-85 she saw 56 children in seven groups; by 1989-90 she was meeting 227 children in twenty-three groups (figures drawn from the Catholic chaplain's report 1984-90). Because she had accepted early retirement from the Catholic teacher training college, she was able to give considerable time to her chaplaincy work, although not as official representative of the hierarchy. Nevertheless, in our interview (March 1992) she was keen to emphasize that her relationship with the Bishop and parish priests had improved, now that the Catholic Church was prepared to admit that integrated schools were 'experimental' rather than unacceptable.

The Presbyterian chaplain conceded in an interview in March 1992 that, because of too many parish pressures, he did not get into Lagan often enough.



When he came about once a month, he usually saw twelve pupils withdrawn from two classes for about twenty minutes. He found that detailed denominational teaching was generally inappropriate since, like pupils in other schools, they often lacked basic knowledge of Christianity, a view shared by the Catholic sister. His aim therefore was to build relationships with the children that were different from staff-pupil classroom relationships, but he acknowledged how inadequate his time for this work was. Since he helped at Lagan in a purely private capacity, not as a representative of his Presbyterian Church, there was little more that he could do. When asked whether the Church could officially appoint him, he reiterated the familiar theme that the Protestant Churches were unlikely to support integrated schools since, unlike controlled schools where they had transferors' rights, they were granted no influence on the governing body. He had a personal commitment to Lagan developed through his friendship with the principal and enhanced after his daughter became a pupil.

The recent record of the other Protestant chaplains has been uneven. For example, the previous Baptist minister's irregular visits contrast with the current chaplain, whose more reliable contribution may be encouraged also by his own daughter's attendance at Lagan. The non-subscribing Presbyterian has maintained regular contact with her small number of pupils. However, the current Church of Ireland minister has hardly ever visited Lagan: his predecessor in the parish took his pastoral role more seriously, starting for example a lively Thursday Club to which children could 'come and ask anything' of the chaplains, who took it in turns to run the weekly lunchtime meetings; the Club has stopped since his departure. One third year girl, interviewed in October 1991, admitted that she had not seen

her Church of Ireland chaplain apart from one meeting in her first year, though she would have liked to see him since 'the Presbyterians always used to go out to see Sister Clarke' (sic). Her parents expressed surprise that this was less than they had been led to expect from the prospectus; but they were not too worried as they were all committed Church attenders each Sunday. The Church of Ireland bishop acknowledged that it was for the individual minister to manage his own parish work, and that the current incumbent did not see the voluntary link with Lagan as a priority. Nevertheless, following our interview in October 1991, the bishop took the trouble to visit Lagan personally twice within six months to see for himself a Christian integrated school.

There is some danger that the teaching staff may see chaplains as 'mere functionaries' who have little to do with the teaching process other than to disrupt it by withdrawing pupils and taking time out of examination classes. One chaplain commented: 'I am not unwelcome in the staff room. I'm just not necessary to what the staff are doing.' Staff, expressing views at a residential weekend in March 1988, saw the chaplains' role as more pastoral than for denominational instruction. They wished for greater integration between the work of chaplains and teachers, and welcomed the recent provision of a chaplains' room within the school to mark a recognition of their role in the Lagan community. The proposal to appoint two full-time chaplains was generally well received. One group acknowledged the difficulties a single Protestant chaplain might face: 'while he/she could not speak with authority on individual Church policies, it should be possible for someone who related well to young people to function successfully as chaplain to all our Protestant pupils, consulting Church representatives as and when

necessary.' In an interview in March 1992 the deputy head recognised that it was unrealistic to expect the Protestant chaplain to be 'all things to all Protestants', but he thought there was some pan-Protestant dimension which could be usefully explored. The new appointments from 1992, combining some teaching with pastoral commitments to staff and pupils, should strengthen the staff-chaplain relationship.

Another aspect under review is the chaplains' link with parents. The Protestant children have generally seen their denominational links primarily through their Sunday schools and parish Churches. Catholic parents, on the other hand, 'lack confidence in their own ability to hand on the faith' (Catholic chaplain's report, February 1990), and the parish has generally expected the school to cover catechetical instruction. Looking back over six years, Sr. Clarke regretted that 'parental awareness of the chaplaincy provision remained minimal....with a corresponding absence of support from them, even at a personal level, about their children's needs.' This may 'stem from lack of communication, but they could be challenged by the school to cooperate in their own interests.' An apparent reduction in the anxiety felt by current Catholic parents as compared with the early years may perhaps be explicable in terms of a higher degree of confidence that Lagan has not undermined their children's faith, as is evidenced by Lagan pupils completing their education as practising Roman Catholics (cf. Colin Irwin's 1991 research).<sup>73</sup>

The Catholic RE teacher reflected that most Catholic parents seemed to look to

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<sup>73</sup>Irwin, C. (1991) 'Education and the Development of social integration in divided societies', Belfast: Queen's University.

Lagan to provide specific Roman Catholic education. But it often appeared more to do with 'cultural expectations' than with purely doctrinal matters: it was expected that the children would grow up with a clear Catholic identity as much as with a personal faith. The Catholic chaplain independently agreed: although the 'faith issue' was important, she acknowledged that the children were keen 'to retain their sense of belonging to the cultural tradition which has been part of their family for generations.' She found that day or weekend retreats (e.g. at Rostrevor in 1985 and 1989 or Corrymeela in 1988) were particularly effective in supporting the pupils' Catholic identity, though they happened too infrequently; the pilgrimage to Knock in June 1989 'generated a lot of enthusiasm, because the children had a new sense of their own Church at prayer.'

Meanwhile, the Catholic authorities, while insisting that integrated schools do not qualify as 'Catholic schools' for true Catholic families, have reluctantly accepted integrated education as an 'experiment', if parents want it. 'Integrated education has now an opportunity to demonstrate its capacity to deliver its ideals. I am quite happy to await the results.' (Cardinal Daly, interviewed for Fortnight magazine, 13 September 1991). The marked defensiveness exhibited by all the Churches ten years ago appears now to be succeeded by a fragile tolerance; it may be that they are reluctant to appear hesitant in their support for the principle of parental choice (currently high on the political agenda), since this might make central government less sympathetic to their claim for equality of treatment and additional funding.

A joint head of RE summed up the *raison d'être* for chaplains in his paper to the staff residential conference in March 1988:

‘Chaplains are signs of our wanting to belong to the wider Christian family. They are one way of expressing the desire that, denominationally, we wish to be fully ourselves. They provide an important focus of identity for pupils and, ideally, a valuable supportive pastoral role.’

His colleague in the RE department, who had been involved in the working party on chaplaincy, emphasized the importance of the two new chaplains working as a team in an open, non-dogmatic collaboration: their job descriptions also highlight the importance of close liaison with the honorary chaplains and the local parishes.

iii) Worship. The issue of worship has been addressed in different ways as the school has developed. Before moving into its new buildings, Lagan had no proper assembly hall in which to hold corporate acts of worship, so that assemblies tended to be classroom-based. The prospectuses have consistently stated that ‘as a Christian school, Lagan College has regular worship. This is intended to allow pupils and staff to take part in appropriate acts of worship and to express together their sense of belonging to a Christian school.’ This includes celebrating the main Christian festivals and stressing ‘issues important to the nature of the College such as peace and reconciliation and justice, concern for others and responsibility for the ‘two-thirds’ world’ (1992 Prospectus).

To encourage all staff to feel confident in leading class worship, the RE department and chaplains drew up some guidelines for prayer, which were discussed at the staff conference in 1985. These guidelines highlighted two particular sensitivities in a joint Protestant/Catholic school, viz. the making of the sign of the cross, and the doxology to the Lord’s Prayer, in Ireland

generally used only by Catholics and Protestants respectively. It was suggested that it would be appropriate to allow time for pupils to make the sign of the Cross both at the beginning and the end of worship, if the teachers did not use it themselves, and that 'since there are no doctrinal reasons to the contrary, Roman Catholic pupils should be encouraged, but not forced, to join in saying the doxology when it is added.' (Perhaps both groups would be reassured by being aware of the great antiquity of both usages in Church history.)

These guidelines were reconsidered at the staff conference in March 1988. Many felt that new staff had not been inducted into form prayers, and that the College 'had lost some of our more overt Christian practices, e.g prayer or meditation at form-time, before start of lessons, before staff meetings, etc.' It was noted that 'at one time we felt there was an over-emphasis on Christian worship in the College; since then we have gone too far in the other direction.' As a result of the conference, the 'amended guidelines for prayer at Lagan College' were published in May 1988, and outline examples are now included as part of the new staff induction programme. The principal explained (in March 1992) that form prayers are scheduled to take place at midday registration, but admitted that, as in most schools, it is 'taken more seriously by some form tutors than others.' Inevitably as the staff increases in size, it can no longer be assumed that they are a cohesive group meeting each other daily with a common mind and practice. The induction programme is crucial if staff are to share in the school's Christian ethos and its overt expression through school worship.

Other regular services are held at Christmas and in the week of prayer for

Christian Unity in January, using both Catholic and Protestant Church buildings. Lagan's requests to use two different Catholic Churches in 1987 and 1989 were explicitly refused by the parish priest after consulting the bishop. He expressed courteous regrets, but continued,

'It is the policy of the Church, not only in Ireland but all over the world to encourage parents to send their children to Catholic schools, because these are the best means to help them to pass on their faith to their children. To grant use of ----- to Lagan College could be taken as implying a certain amount of approval and this could confuse Catholic parents about their responsibility to Catholic education.' (Letter of 6 November 1987).

The Catholic chaplain in 1990 expressed optimism that such problems were 'likely to be resolved in coming years with the development of better relationships.' Meanwhile Lagan has continued to use the Catholic Clonard monastery for appropriate celebrations, where the pupils and staff have always received a warm welcome.

Another issue in Christian schools with more than one tradition is the Eucharist. Unlike other ecumenical Church schools in Britain, eucharistic worship has never been part of Lagan's experience. The centrality of the Mass or Holy Communion, as explored for example at St Bede's Redhill, opened up lively debates about permissible practice within the code of canon law; but at Lagan the issue is even more contentious.<sup>74</sup> This is no doubt due in part to the strong Protestant traditions of Northern Ireland where, even in the Church of Ireland (the Church of John Bramhill and Jeremy Taylor) communion services are normally celebrated only once a month, in contrast with the weekly parish eucharists normal in the Church of England and where

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<sup>74</sup>'The Governors have long been aware that the celebration of the Sacraments, particularly the Eucharist, in an ecumenical school in Northern Ireland is a sensitive matter.' (minutes of Governors' meeting, 9th September 1992).

in many Churches that could not be called Anglo-Catholic there is a daily celebration. In other Protestant Churches communion may be taken only once a year. Admittedly when one remembers that medieval Catholic canon law had difficulty in requiring the laity to communicate more than once a year,<sup>75</sup> the divergence can come to look almost like a convergence. But the difference between Protestant practice and the weekly Catholic mass is marked. The principal commented: 'The eucharist is divisive enough among Protestants; they can't even agree about candles.' Nevertheless, once the new chaplains become established in post, this may be an area to explore further, perhaps drawing on the experience, where relevant, of ecumenical schools elsewhere in Britain.

Meanwhile, school worship remains central to the life of a Christian school.

As the Catholic chaplain wrote in her 1990 report:

'The experience of singing and praying together, hearing and reflecting on the word of God, sharing something of religious significance, is what young people need at this stage of faith development.'

#### **f) Community Relations**

No less than in its early years, ten years on Lagan College emphasises community links with parents, with other educational establishments, and with the Churches. Yet in some ways the issues have changed: Lagan is no longer dependent for its daily survival on direct 'hands-on' parental involvement. Nor as an expanding, oversubscribed school can it be so easily ignored by the Churches, its feeder primaries, and secondary competitors.

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<sup>75</sup>'At least at Easter': Fourth Lateran Council (1215) canon 21. (Tanner, N.P. (1990) Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils, Sheed & Ward p.245.)



i) Parental Liaison. While there are still many parents living in polarised sectarian residential areas who courageously send their children to Lagan on the special buses from the city centre, there are increasing numbers who, at the same time as wanting Christian values and an integrated ethos, just want a 'good school' for their offspring. Others from mixed marriages or non-practising religious families see integrated education as a welcome alternative to segregated denominational schools.<sup>76</sup> In contrast to the early days when it opened its doors to all-comers (within the 60 : 40 denominational parameter), Lagan now has to operate a careful balance in choosing its intake to ensure an appropriate cross-section of pupil ability, denomination, and social class.<sup>77</sup>

In 1992, for example, 51% of Lagan's pupils were Protestant, 49% Catholic, and over 40% from working class backgrounds. Because of

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<sup>76</sup>See McEwan et al. (1992) op. cit.

<sup>77</sup>Education, 2 March 1990 and 14 August 1992: 'Most integrated schools have waiting lists of Catholics who cannot be admitted for want of Protestants to maintain their essential 60:40 denominational ratio'. As the pressure for places increases, Lagan is inevitably encountering parental resentment when a child is refused admission because of the policy of maintaining a balance. Tony Spencer recognised this issue back in 1987 : it may 'mean that potential pupils from one ethnic-religious community have to be put on to a waiting list until recruitment from the other community catches up.' Osborne, R.D., Cormack, R.J. and Miller, R.L., (eds.) 1987, op. cit. p.108.

oversubscription, Lagan's 1992 prospectus even recommends that parents complete a pre-application form at any time, which 'will help to give a child some priority at the time of transfer from primary school.

| Admissions balance since 1987 |            |          |
|-------------------------------|------------|----------|
| Year                          | Protestant | Catholic |
| 1987-88                       | 52%        | 48%      |
| 1988-89                       | 56%        | 44%      |
| 1989-90                       | 53%        | 47%      |
| 1990-91                       | 52%        | 48%      |
| 1991-92                       | 50%        | 50%      |
| 1992-93                       | 51%        | 49%      |

In Northern Ireland, parents have a high regard for education, but the pressure at secondary transfer is considerable. The principal recalled an example of parents' special pleading after their child's pet rabbit died on the night before the first admissions test and, by a singular misfortune, the replacement rabbit died on the night before the second test. Another head of a Protestant voluntary grammar school remarked: 'The vast majority of parents show a concern for their children which, in some parts of England, is not in evidence.'<sup>78</sup>

As in most schools, 'parents whose children are admitted to the College are expected to support the College in its policies with regard to homework and discipline.' They are also 'encouraged to take the opportunity to be involved in the education of their children and in the life of the College', particularly

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<sup>78</sup>Seven Days' Magazine, 20 November 1988; a view confirmed in personal interviews.

through their elected Parent Council and governor representatives. In the early years, the Parent Council - a statutory committee (unlike most parent teacher associations)- provided a lively arena for the discussion of ideas. One founder parent commented that 'it worked reasonably well', but another admitted that it was also 'quite contentious' because parents were personally so involved: she recalled that some parents were offended when the first principal 'refused to have masses of parents helping around the school, but she was obviously right.'<sup>79</sup>

Two Lagan parents are still elected to represent each year group, which provides an effective forum for parental consultation. Balancing the commitment and 'emotional motivation' of founder parents with the enhanced management role of the professional staff is crucial to the school's development and in line with government policy of harnessing parental power constructively.<sup>80</sup>

In supporting the children's religious nurture, the role of parents is of paramount importance. Most Church schools would endorse the vital three-way partnership of home, parish, and school with its shared Christian values.

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<sup>79</sup> In another integrated school, the Council was initially open to all parents. But after it was 'hijacked' by a small clique, it started acting as a second Board of Governors, which caused considerable problems for the management. In yet another instance, the previous principal bitterly commented that the benefits of parental involvement could be exaggerated: his school was founded by 'strong-minded and persuasive characters' convincing the parents with 'jargon and high-flown waffle', that 'theirs would be a fine school and that anything was possible, without having the courage or self-discipline to detail for the parents the sheer hard work and the degree of finance that would be required in order to achieve even minimal progress.' (cited in ed. Caul, L. (1990) Schools under Scrutiny; the case of Northern Ireland, Macmillan, p.62).

<sup>80</sup>Cf. Seamus Dunn in Oxford Review of Education, (1989) vol.15, no. 2.

For the Catholic parents at Lagan, who receive no encouragement<sup>81</sup> and in some cases obstruction from their parish priests, the link with the school in respect of religious education and catechesis is even more essential. Particular efforts have continued to support Catholic parents. Whereas in the early years Lagan seemed more concerned with reassuring parents, ten years on the College seems less defensive and even active in encouraging them to become more involved in their child's religious nurture (cf. the Catholic chaplain's report, 1990).

ii) Relationships with, and the views of, other educational institutions. These relationships are gradually developing as Lagan is now able to be less protective of its own interests and survival. The 1991 prospectus states: 'The College welcomes cooperation with other post-primary school and further education colleges in its vicinity<sup>82</sup>. It does so to make optimum use of scarce facilities and teaching resources, and to broaden the social contacts of its pupils. The College seeks regular use of publicly provided facilities and services, e.g. Library service, Museum service, Leisure centres, Area Board and District Council playing-fields'.

However, while Lagan may appear more open and confident, some of its neighbouring schools have expressed uncertainty and even hostility to this

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<sup>81</sup>Mgr McCaughan commented: 'The home, the church, and the school work in harmony in a parish, and if any of these are missing, a gap is created which an integrated school cannot fill' (Education, 2 March, 1990). One parent interviewed for the 1992 survey by Queen's University Belfast commented that their decision to send a child to an integrated school caused problems: 'I have an uncle who is a parish priest and it went down like a bomb'.

<sup>82</sup>In 1992, for example, a one-year NVQ level 2 course in Business Studies was available for Lagan Sixth Form students at Castlereagh Further Education College.

new concept of integrated education. Unlike nineteenth century attempts at mixed Protestant/Catholic schools (e.g. Greencastle in 1812), Lagan College had to start, reluctantly, outside the established dual system. Yet unlike the independent Christian schools recently founded by the Free Presbyterians, it does not wish to be separated, let alone isolated, from the mainstream. Ironically perhaps, its very definition as a DENI 'grant-maintained integrated school' has labelled it as a third category, distinguished from 'maintained' or 'controlled' sectors and thereby different from its neighbours. In a personal interview, the deputy director of the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools argued that since it was bound to become just another school system, it would inevitably undermine the Roman Catholic system.

It could plausibly be argued that in Northern Ireland separate religious schooling is more a symptom than a cause of sectarian division, and that, while separate schooling sustains and reinforces the division, the heart of the problem lies in the cultural context of different religious communities<sup>83</sup>. Such a view is presupposed by republicans, for example like Bernadette Devlin McAliskey, who is suspicious of integrated schools 'on the grounds that education is one area where those of the nationalist tradition have control over their own lives and therefore not an area to be yielded lightly'.<sup>84</sup> Parents of both communities considered that 'The Orange Order and the Republican Party can take more blame than segregated education'; 'there is

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<sup>83</sup>John Haldane on 'Religious Education in a pluralist society', in (1986) British Journal of Educational Studies, vol. 34, no.2.

<sup>84</sup>see Mary Kenny's article, Tablet 10th February 1990.

an awful lot that goes on in people's homes that would have a lot more influence on the children than the school system'.<sup>85</sup>

Moreover, educationists are also divided on the issue of whether integrated schooling can heal the deep wounds of years of sectarianism. Headteachers in Enniskillen, interviewed on the ITV programme 'Borderlines' in 1989, reflected on their community in the aftermath of the murderous bomb blast of November 1987, and commented that the need was to work for cooperation rather than integration. They recognised the importance of education as a 'very stable factor' in Northern Ireland, but saw 'integrated education' as yet another source of division, tending to 'cream off the middle class children'. However, in the same programme, representatives of the 'Enniskillen Together Movement', founded in 1988 out of 'the collective guilt of the community', expressed the view that 'integrated education is one of the answers', since the segregation of all schools along religious lines inevitably exacerbates community divisions. In fact, their efforts succeeded in obtaining planning permission, mobile classrooms, and the necessary teachers in only four months, allowing the opening of an integrated primary school in September 1989.

Personal interviews with staff and principals from segregated secondary schools in Belfast in October 1991 revealed considerable scepticism and anxiety about the effects of integrated education. All of them felt that, although 'someone has to do something about sectarianism', Lagan College does not get to the heart of the problem, since the children who attend Lagan 'have no religious hang-ups anyway'; and 'how many new disciples are they

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<sup>85</sup> McEwan et al. (1992) op. cit.

bringing in?' What were more effective, they argued, were the inter-school links and cross-curricular developments, for example in sport or public-speaking and Education for Mutual Understanding. One teacher, however, suggested that such links had been far more extensive before the Troubles started in 1969, and another admitted that 'you cannot always publicise such links for fear of adverse reactions from parents.'

Similar interviews with primary school principals, reported by Morgan (et al.) in the British Journal for Religious Education (vol.14, no.3, Summer 1992), supported these strategies for improving community relations, adding the view of one headteacher: 'Each system could then pursue its own specific aims without threatening the other; there would be no necessity for compromising beliefs' (p. 172). The apparent fear that integration means compromising beliefs is directly addressed by Lagan in its publicity material: 'It is not part of the aim of Lagan College to produce some watered-down or synthetic version of the Christian faith in pursuit of a false eirenicism' (1992 prospectus, p.4). The headteacher quoted evidently assumed that compromise of 'truth' is simply unavoidable with the best will in the world. Lagan irritates by putting a question-mark against the assumption.

While these negative perceptions are real enough, they seemed to be based on hearsay or what people read in the newspapers. Little effort had been made to verify them.

'Opting for contact with other schools did not extend to establishing links with the local integrated school. Only one of the nine principals had visited it; only one expressed his intention of meeting its principal. The remainder had had no contact whatsoever. One principal said that this was because they were probably trying to

ignore it'.<sup>86</sup>

The hope commonly expressed to this researcher that cross-curricular links will bring about reconciliation may not be so effective in practice. One Protestant primary teacher acknowledged cross-community contact was 'useful', but thought its effectiveness was limited, since it needed to be reinforced by regular contact between Catholic and Protestant children using the same shops, swimming pools, etc. He described the Education for Mutual Understanding (EMU) programme as too vague to prevent teachers from avoiding difficult questions which might challenge pupils' or parents' views<sup>87</sup>. The materials were, he thought, wishy-washy, and the compulsory INSET 'a dreadful waste of time.' However, he acknowledged the usefulness of jointly organized residential trips where a Protestant child shared a room with a Catholic: 'Back in the school playground, at least he can say that the child of 'the other religion' doesn't smell when the other children make playground comments.' In the Tablet (16 February 1991), Duncan Morrow argued that EMU is deliberately vague on the practical details of contact between schools 'so as to allow for local differences, hesitations, and difficulties.'

The director of the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools as we have noted, believed EMU and Cultural Heritage offered a much better chance of achieving results than integrated schools.<sup>88</sup> In a personal interview, his deputy Mr

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<sup>86</sup> Morgan, V. et al. (1992), op. cit. p.172.

<sup>87</sup>The Northern Ireland Conflict and Mediation Association fosters school-based training for teachers and pupils to cope with discussions about 'conflict resolution'.

<sup>88</sup>Education, 2 March 1990.



McCavera commented that inter-school visits broke down the in-built fear of the other community, and allowed teachers to meet for the first time; if the exchange was arranged over some distance, children might even stay in each other's houses. This mixing was better than integrated education because the children remained rooted in their own community where they were likely to be for their adult lives. EMU was 'the only way to get into ghetto areas'. However, this optimistic view was not shared by another influential Catholic, an RE lecturer at St. Mary's training college in Belfast, who criticised the message behind EMU that 'if you act more tolerantly, things will get better.' He felt that this analysis did little to tackle the real question of why people feel and therefore act the way they do: if there was no common view of what the problem is, it was not surprising that Churchmen and politicians could go no further than polite conversation. Like integrated schools, it did nothing to address the social divisions based on pseudo-ethnic and religious labels and the different levels of access to power and wealth (a viewpoint also reported by Duncan Morrow's Tablet article, 16 February 1991).

On the Protestant side, Ian Paisley's Democratic Unionists were concerned that EMU was an attempt to de-protestantize children by taking them to Roman Catholic Churches and teaching them Gaelic songs. More surprisingly, the education adviser for the Church of Ireland's General Synod thought that the divisions between Catholic and Protestant schools paled into insignificance beside the gulf between the grammar and secondary-intermediate sectors, and that it was really 'a waste of time transporting children to visit each other's schools'<sup>89</sup>. Comparable frustration is found expressed by curriculum developers: 'The educational consequences, particularly in Belfast, of the

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<sup>89</sup> See 'The other divide', Education, 22 May 1992

increasing social and intellectual segregation of children at eleven into different educational institutions raised grave doubts as to the validity and value of DENI and Area Board INSET programmes to undertake whole school educational development.<sup>90</sup>

Despite considerable public expenditure ( a budget of £200k in 1987, £325k in 1988, and £450k in 1989)<sup>91</sup> and the government's requirement that from 1992 EMU must be taught as a cross-curricular theme within the Northern Ireland Curriculum, the view that EMU can heal conflict is felt to be over-optimistic. One inspector commented: 'We cannot expect clearly measurable progress in the short term. Schools and teachers cannot do it all.' The constraints on curriculum time, the apprehension of parents, and the impact of violence in society all limit effectiveness. But 'children need to be given opportunities to come to terms with diversity and to recognise that both similarities and differences exist in the family, in school, and in the wider community'.<sup>92</sup>

How effective EMU and other cross-community curricular initiatives are in comparison to the full experience of integrated education is hardly proven.

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<sup>90</sup>Crone R. and Malone J. (1983) 'The Human Curriculum', Farset Cooperative Press, p.164.

<sup>91</sup> One Protestant primary school used the funding for inter-school links as 'a way of getting extra money for computers'; although they produced a newspaper with the Catholic school, 'we gained very little from the contact' (personal interview, October 1991). In an interview of March 1992, the Joint Council of Churches spokesman criticised computer purchases to send electronic mail to each other as 'absurd abuse'!

<sup>92</sup> Proceedings of the conference, October 1989, on 'Community and the Curriculum,' p.7

Secondary teachers surveyed in 1992<sup>93</sup> considered that 'policy development in EMU had a low priority and was implemented in widely different ways: most declined to include ecumenism as a dimension of EMU since it drew the curriculum into the potentially contentious issues of religious belief. Dr Colin Irwin expressed his doubts (in an interview on BBC 1, 'The Heart of the Matter', 7 July 1991) on the ground that, by contrast with the daily social interaction in integrated schools, the cross-community links were too infrequent and did not penetrate to a sufficiently deep level. His research into social integration had suggested that, if the informal aspects of formal education (e.g. peer group, the school's community role) were effective influences, 'schools like Lagan College may have the potential to produce a far more positive effect on the improvement of inter-community relations in Northern Ireland than EMU alone.'<sup>94</sup> Assuming, however, that segregated education is likely to continue into the foreseeable future, the links at least can be said to be 'fascinating attempts to achieve something intrinsically very difficult'.<sup>95</sup>

Although much of the good practice learnt at Lagan has been written into these cross-curricular initiatives, funding for cross-community contact links has ironically hitherto been denied to Lagan. When the principal bid for money to support a residential experience for children, he was told 'it was not for

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<sup>93</sup>Smith, A. and Robinson, A. (1992) 'Education for Mutual Understanding: Perceptions and Policy', Coleraine: Centre for the Study of Conflict.

<sup>94</sup>Irwin, C. (1991) op. cit. p.90.

<sup>95</sup>Seamus Dunn's paper to the 'Community and the Curriculum' conference, October 1989, p.16.

integrated schools because they were already linked.'

Alongside their critical views on integration at Lagan expressed in personal interviews, staff in neighbouring secondary Belfast schools also dismissed Lagan as a middle-class phenomenon, founded by middle-class parents who really wanted a grammar school for their children who had failed 11+. After all, it called itself a 'College' and in the early years offered O levels like a grammar school type of curriculum. Yet it was not the only school to open its doors to 'all religions': the Methodist College had for example 10% Catholics. These sharp views are matched by research findings from primary schools, where some principals dismissed the 'class-specific gesture' of integrated schools as futile; it merely removed from the system 'those parents and children whose liberal views acted as the necessary leaven'.<sup>96</sup>

At least in the case of Lagan these views are based on a mistaken assumption. Colin Irwin's research of 1991<sup>97</sup> showed that the social class structure of Lagan's pupil intake was 42% working class, 50% middle class. He acknowledged that 'perfection in this matter is impossible to achieve in practice', but emphasised that Lagan College has a better social mix than most schools, since it made strenuous efforts to attract children from 149 feeder primary schools, representing the more sectarian working-class residential areas of Belfast as much as more integrated middle-class communities.

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<sup>96</sup>Morgan, V. et al. (1992), op. cit. . The principals conceded that Lagan offered a particular kind of education for children difficult to place elsewhere or those from mixed marriages.

<sup>97</sup>Irwin, C. (1991) op. cit. p.129

This strategy was confirmed by the principal, although he admitted that it was not possible to guarantee an appropriate social mix through the admissions criteria. 'I expect the situation remains much as it was in Colin Irwin's research, i.e. 40-45% working class – in Belfast that also means no job' (personal letter, September 1992)<sup>98</sup>. A Catholic teacher wryly commented that his own preconception of Lagan having mainly 'middle class kids' was knocked on the head as soon as he walked into his first teaching class.

A real problem for Lagan lies in combating these accusations of elitism. The media have been helpful in publicising Dr Irwin's findings. Writing in Fortnight (8 June 1991), Robin Wilson commented: 'Dr Irwin realises that he has to slice through a rich thicket of obfuscatory myths constructed by the defenders of the status quo. But he hacks away at them, including the notions that integrated schooling is middle-class, that those who attend don't need it, and that it doesn't work. His research at Lagan shows clearly that it isn't, they do, and it does.'

Nevertheless the College also needs the effective publicity of good examination results if it is to compete with grammar schools, because traditionally parents have seen the 11+ as the key stepping-stone to success in life,

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<sup>98</sup>Unemployment figures cited on Channel 4 (18th July 1992) revealed 1 in 7 out of work; these included 9% of Protestant men but 23% of Catholic men.

particularly if they come from working-class backgrounds.<sup>99</sup> Convincing these parents that Lagan can help their children to achieve their full potential, while avoiding the stigma of elitism and divisiveness if it is perceived as a quasi-grammar school, is a precarious balancing act.

Northern Ireland's education community, as elsewhere, is under pressure from falling pupil roll numbers and financial stringency. In such circumstances, it is sometimes easier to point the finger at Lagan College down the road than to tilt at the windmills of government bureaucracy. The reduction in the birthrate (34,000 in 1964 to 27,000 in 1983, according to Compton in 1987) combined with the 10% increase in the proportion of children attending grammar schools has greatly concerned Belfast secondary-intermediate school principals. In personal interviews, they anticipated more amalgamations and resented a cut in their 'special allowances'; they suspected conspiracy in the widening of the ability range of grammar schools.<sup>100</sup> 'In the past only grade I's got into Methody, but nowadays even some 2's get in'. They suggested that the boys' secondary schools, with their street gang culture, were even more difficult to handle if the more motivated boys and their parents transferred to integrated or grammar schools; and single-sex girls' schools were understandably reluctant to amalgamate with

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<sup>99</sup>Middle class parents with ready cheque books have been used to buying 10% of the places in grammar schools for children who failed 11+; at the end of each school year, the child is tested to see whether he/she is up to the standard required for a free school place. The question whether the grammar school academic curriculum is appropriate for an individual child's ability is seldom asked. Perhaps an even more prickly issue, recognized by Mr McCavera of the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools in a personal interview, is that in Belfast up to 7% of Roman Catholic parents send their children to Protestant grammar schools in the hope that they will face less discrimination in their adult lives (e.g. as rugby players instead of Gaelic footballers).

<sup>100</sup>Noted as long ago as 1983 by Crone, R. and Malone, J., op. cit., p.164.

such boys' schools to create more administratively viable mixed secondary schools. For these principals, therefore, the establishment of new integrated schools only exacerbated their problems.

The primary principals interviewed by Morgan (et al.)<sup>101</sup> threw into relief two particular concerns. First, they considered the 'perk' of offering transport to and from integrated schools as an 'unprofessional method of recruitment', tantamount to poaching, and discerned no commitment to idealistic principles if a 'perk' was needed to give parents a motive to choose integrated schools. This reported view seemed misinformed since all children, including Lagan pupils, are automatically entitled to free bus transport if they live more than three miles from school, an entitlement which in Northern Ireland (unlike England) has not yet been questioned.

Secondly, these principals resented the fact that integrated schools were able to use charitable donations to establish nursery units, an expense justified by an official of the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education on the ground that parents need to 'become used to the idea of integrated education from the child's early years.' The desirability of nursery provision for all is on the political agenda, and it may be that the success of integrated nurseries may encourage an extension of such good educational practice to the segregated sector.

The question of government funding is even more contentious. While Lagan College had to raise 15% of its capital costs as a voluntary maintained school

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<sup>101</sup>Morgan, V. et al. (1992), op. cit.

from 1984 (putting it on the same footing as Catholic maintained or voluntary grammar schools), the suspicion that it was receiving favourable treatment was reinforced when the 1989 Order allowed it to become grant-maintained with 100% funding. Of the primary principals included in the survey, 'most regarded this kind of funding as highly irresponsible in a time of financial cutback'.<sup>102</sup> Both secondary and primary teachers in segregated schools argued that this money was unlikely to be new money, and was therefore better spent supporting the already well-established schools with their long-delayed capital building programmes. The Catholic schools in particular felt reason to complain that they still had to find the 15% for capital projects, and the government's 85% claw-back arrangement meant that the funds from a closing Catholic school could not be automatically rechannelled into other Catholic school capital projects: their sense of the injustice that integrated schools should be politically favoured with 100% support, especially since this policy had not been democratically proposed in the election manifesto<sup>103</sup>, even led to the Catholic Bishops pursuing an unsuccessful action in the High Court against the 1989 Order.

Fr. Denis Faul, speaking at Maynooth in February 1989, argued that the government's 'attacks on Catholic education by the underfunding and the financial advantages given to Integrated Education are part of a failure to cherish the two traditions equally .....The whole emphasis is on looking at the

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<sup>102</sup>ibid. p. 175

<sup>103</sup> Only the Alliance Party committed itself to supporting integrated education in its manifesto.



Protestant tradition.'<sup>104</sup> The agreement in November 1992 that Catholic schools would no longer have to provide their 15% contribution was greeted with parallel indignation by the Ulster Teachers Union who, sceptical of the government's promise of extra money, thought that financial cuts were likely in controlled school budgets as a consequence. The spokesmen of the Irish Council of Churches were equally concerned about the effect of government policy on controlled schools.

As integrated schools establish themselves as a viable alternative on the scene, it is perhaps not surprising to find anxiety or antagonism among those who feel pressured or threatened by their existence. The very fact of their creation implies a negative criticism of the existing establishment. Moreover, 'there's nothing like a whiff of success for making enemies', observed Seamus Dunn<sup>105</sup>. The 1992 survey of primary school principals, concluded:

'Paradoxically, in its anxiety to ensure their success, the government may have placed them even further beyond the pale. If integrated schools claim a strong commitment to the community, they cannot afford to be oblivious to the attitude they themselves generate..... Integration is about the destruction of myths, not, as seems a very real danger at present, about the creation of new ones'.  
(op. cit. p.176)

Lagan is far from oblivious. It has made considerable efforts to involve the College in the local community and beyond. Archbishop Robin Eames, in a personal conversation (June 1992), observed that, although he was unsure how far integrated schools would have an effect on community relations, he

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<sup>104</sup>The Church's Task: Justice, the perfection of charity

<sup>105</sup>'Community and the Curriculum': Conference proceedings, October 1989, p.14.

recognised Lagan College as 'not as much on the outside as I used to think.' Lagan is aware of the danger of a 'holier-than-thou' attitude towards its segregated neighbours, but breaking down the barriers of prejudice and suspicion has to be a two-way process. It has never claimed to be the answer to Northern Ireland's problems, and knows only too well that it must work in close partnership with its community for the future benefit of its children.

## 5. Looking to the future

'Not to develop is to die',<sup>106</sup> commented Phil Dineen, at the time headteacher of St. Bede's, Redhill. Perhaps for Lagan College that has to be even more true. Its existence originated in a demand for change, in a feeling that institutionalised segregation must be intolerable in fact and consequence because of its role in perpetuating distrust and alienation. Such a school cannot stand still. But external and internal pressures impose restraints through which its progress and future development were and are more a matter of hypothesis than secure prediction.

The situation of the school was naturally seen in religious terms. 'There's no givenness about what we're doing', said the principal in 1992; 'no one took us up to the top of the mountain and showed us the promised land. Like Abraham, we set off in faith and we don't know when we've got there. It is like being on a pilgrimage; we are learning as we go.' It would be easy for the College to sit back, even to stall, as it settles into its new buildings. But as the deputy head commented,

'we must keep moving in our exploration of religious experience, accepting the importance of continuity within our traditions, yet

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<sup>106</sup>Tablet, 21st May 1983

facing up to the opportunity for rethinking what might be changed: the polarised alternatives of entrenched fundamentalism or wholesale rejection have created unnecessary tension by implying that reform must mean that what went before was inherently wrong. People need to be persuaded that they can still recognise the value of the past, while believing in progressive development which may yet allow them a more open and positive attitude to change' (personal interview, March 1992).

What then are the issues to be addressed for the future? The principal acknowledged Lagan's foundations to be well-laid; but he felt that the school needed to develop further its three key principles.

'As a Christian school, it had to clarify and reevaluate its overt and hidden curricula. As an all-ability school, it had to ensure proper differentiation according to pupils' learning needs. As an integrated school, it had to maintain the balance in admissions of gender, class, and denomination, while also enhancing the development of cultural diversity. It was no longer crying as a prophetic voice in the wilderness but, more in the tradition of Nehemiah, was building up and strengthening its community ethos' (interviews in 1992).

In order to achieve this, its programme of religious education is under review in the light of the new common core Agreed Syllabus for Northern Ireland, to safeguard an appropriate academic study of the subject (not invariably the case in Roman Catholic schools), balanced by more specific denominational teaching within the respective traditions (not generally the case in Protestant schools). As the two new full-time chaplains explore their role in the College, they are in a position to enhance the importance of collective and shared school worship, whilst encouraging the pupils' understanding of their own denominational and sacramental traditions.

But a Christian school is characterized by more than just its religious education. It is also about developing a Christian ethos in which the different traditions are recognised, valued, and brought closer together. 'It is the

challenge of creating school communities where unity consists of reconciled diversity and not uniformity', said the principal . Duncan Morrow, writing in the Tablet (16 February 1991) agreed: 'Parents of children at integrated schools have discovered that integrated education is about open acknowledgement of differences, not about assimilation by the back door.' It is a danger, recognized by the staff and the principal, that in the midst of coping with a new building, new curricular initiatives, and financial management responsibilities, the focus on the Christian ethos unintentionally slips down the list of priorities.

The College also recognises the importance of 'Laganising' the staff, many of whom have previously worked in segregated schools, but had deliberately chosen to come to Lagan to escape the ethos of sectarianism.<sup>107</sup> The Catholic staff in particular have their future career prospects in the Catholic schools put in jeopardy because they have defied the policy of their Catholic teacher training colleges committed to training Catholic teachers for Catholic schools. The principal frankly regretted that in staff appointments he could sometimes be disappointed by the range and quality of Catholic applicants; the best teachers in that tradition might hesitate to apply to Lagan. Moreover, no less than in its early years, Lagan also has to ensure that teachers who have previously worked in a selective system are retrained to teach across the ability range, to provide appropriate differentiation for all Lagan's pupils.

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<sup>107</sup>A Protestant teacher commented that in her previous school there was 'a marked atmosphere of bigotry among the staff, let alone the children; it would be strange to go back now into a Protestant school.' A Catholic teacher added that establishing a Catholic ethos in her previous school in deprived west Belfast was extremely difficult. When she saw the Lagan post advertised, she thought 'Now there's something I'd like to be part of.'

Harnessing staff idealism and creating a professional team are a challenge for any school. The principal reflected that the minimal level of inter-staff bickering was in part due to their relative youthfulness but, more importantly, 'because they shared a common sense of purpose.' Holding on to that purpose and maintaining a Christian vision in the midst of contemporary educational pressures cannot be easy.

Any evaluation of the development of an integrated school in Northern Ireland must take into account political, ecclesiastical, economic, educational and community issues. But in the last analysis the school's success or failure depends on the children themselves. This chapter therefore concludes with the pupils' views on Lagan College. What difference has the school made to the attitudes of the children by the time they leave?

#### The Children's View

There can be little doubt that Lagan's achievement in diminishing the sense of community polarisation is real. One thirteen year old boy in the school, a Protestant whose father was killed by a paramilitary group ten years ago, commented: 'I never knew a Catholic before I came here. I didn't trust them because they were from the other side. But not any more. We fight about some things here now, but not about being Catholics and Protestants.' And one of the teachers observed: 'It is wrong to assume children are miniature versions of adults. To them it is natural that people should get on together.'

The 1992 prospectus was able to quote one boy who commented: 'Are we really so strange? It's a pity that the trust and friendship generated in Lagan College is not extended across the whole community.' A girl added: 'Coming to

Lagan College has helped me to make friends from all denominations. Not only does the school benefit the pupils, but also their parents; they've got the chance to meet other people from across the divide.'

At the 1992 Cambridge conference on ecumenical education, the principal of Lagan emphasized that it was not enough just to track a child's academic attainment, as with National Curriculum assessments at 7, 11, 14, and 16. What also mattered was whether ecumenical schools increased children's understanding and acceptance of other Christian traditions: for example, did they still have friends later in life from a communion other than their own? How much were they involved in their local parishes and ecumenical groups after leaving school? Colin Irwin's research of 1991 provided some indications in his analysis of these attitudes among present and past pupils.<sup>108</sup> His results showed that 71% of new first year pupils had no friends from the 'other' community;<sup>109</sup> that five years on, pupils had more friends from the 'other' community than from their own; and that past pupils maintained a significant percentage (44%) of friends from the 'other' community, in contrast to similar students at the integrated university (12%).

'Graduates of Lagan College make lasting friendships in, and acquire a better understanding of, the 'other community' to a degree that is not achieved by their contemporaries in segregated schools.' (p.86)

Irwin argued (p.12) that, because humans acquire their primary in-group

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<sup>108</sup>Irwin, C. (1991) op. cit.

<sup>109</sup> Yet 48% of children from Catholic schools had no non-Catholic friends; 86% of those from Protestant schools had no non-Protestant friends.

identity in the years leading up to and including puberty, integrated secondary schools can have a more lasting effect on social behaviour than is seen if a child, educated in an integrated primary school, transfers to a segregated secondary school. (At Lagan only five pupils in the first year intake of 1990 came from an integrated primary school.) He also found (p.23) that schools had more influence on a pupil's friendship patterns than the housing area in which they lived. Lagan's role, therefore, in providing the social opportunity for the establishing of these new friendships and the expression of these social values may be indispensable. Certainly Irwin's findings suggested that Lagan pupils have a better understanding than segregated pupils of the motives of the various groups, both Catholic and Protestant, involved in the conflict (p.59), particularly since 'group stereotypes can be brought into question on an almost daily basis' (p.66). One Catholic boy commented: 'Before I came to this school I thought different about Protestants, but now I know them, I don't know why people are fighting. There's no point.' Because the hidden curriculum is more influential than the overt curriculum, integrated education may have the potential to be more effective than curricular initiatives like Education for Mutual Understanding alone (p.90). The religious institutions which 'promote their own members' interests at the expense of others' must lose their moral authority to secular initiatives or to 'the moral authority of parents who choose to send their children to integrated schools.' Irwin concluded that 'segregated education contributes to the polarisation of the two communities, while integration brings the communities closer together, through increased friendship and mutual understanding' (p.97). The Head Boy of 1991/92 reflected in Lagan's prospectus: 'Seen from outside Northern Ireland, it would sometimes seem that the situation is without hope;

but to come and be part of Lagan College shows that view is simply wrong.'

There remain innumerable problems. It probably does not help Lagan College to be held up by the media as being in itself a model for all integrated education in Northern Ireland. The school is one way of doing it, not necessarily the only way. It has suffered wounds. One of the founder parents of All Children Together (A.C.T.) Movement created great bitterness when he broke away in 1984 to form the Belfast Trust for Integrated Education (BELTIE). He favoured rapid expansion in both primary and secondary sectors, while A.C.T. insisted on prioritising the secure establishment of Lagan College and Forge Primary School. The BELTIE was a leading advocate for the establishment of the National Council for Integrated Education (NICIE) in 1987, which was recognised by the government as the chief coordinating body in the matter. The result was that Lagan College found itself marginalised outside this official network, and felt wary of committing itself to an organisation that had the potential not merely to facilitate but to impose control on the future development of integrated education. Although Lagan's governors finally decided to join N.I.C.I.E. in autumn 1992, healing the abrasions created by the differing convictions of the early pioneers is important if the Lagan 'flagship' is not to find itself adrift on a different sea, but is rather to have the opportunity to influence the debate on future developments. Even so, Lagan's principal has argued that the school should not be regarded as an exclusive model by which other integrated schools are measured, but rather a 'parable' capable of more inclusive interpretations.

The years of hesitation and apparent coolness towards the pioneers of integrated education on the part of the Northern Ireland Office have not made it easy for Lagan College or other integrated schools in the province. Such



caution may, as we have ventured to suggest, be in part explained by the political desire not to offend the Roman Catholic hierarchy or intransigent Protestants more than is utterly necessary. In a society already widely suspicious of Westminster's good intentions towards Ulster<sup>110</sup>, proposals for a change in the structure of educational provision must be a matter where the government is unlikely to lead except, like the Duke of Plazatoro, from well in the rear. Behind the caution there is an evidently long experience that initiatives from England do not easily flourish in Irish soil.

Lagan has established a reputation across Northern Ireland as an integrated school which takes religion seriously. The challenge it poses to the Churches is well summarized by the General Secretary of the Irish Council of Churches, a former Stormont minister of Community Relations:

'The Irish Churches institutionally seem at times to lack compassion on some of the most sensitive areas of life affecting the young. For example, when Protestant and Catholic parents join together to educate their children inside a framework which is Christian and interdenominational, they are often left without the spiritual understanding and support which their courage and ecumenical witness deserve. As such systems grow (and they will), rich opportunities for cooperation between Christian educationists may be lost forever, with secular influences standing to gain.'<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>110</sup>The Anglo-Irish Agreement showed that the British government was not prepared to accept deadlock indefinitely and at least persuaded the Unionists to attend tripartite talks in Lancaster House in July 1992. The British ambassador to Dublin of 1985 reflected in a personal interview (July 1992), that the turning-point came when the Unionists realised that the Conservative Government was no longer committed to 'British Ulster' at any price, and would accept the decision if the majority in the province were to vote for union with the Republic. By November 1992 when the talks ended, all parties stated that they had at least achieved agreement on the main points of disagreement. Sir Patrick Mayhew told Parliament: 'Progress has been made. Six months in the history of Ireland is but an evening gone'.

<sup>111</sup>David Bleakley, Northern Ireland: More than a Holy War, 1989.

The joint schools model, like St Bede's Redhill, which brings together Churches in England, is not a model that Lagan can copy in its entirety. The principal commented that Bishops Patrick Walsh and Gordon McMullan were technically right when they insisted that the Roman Catholic Church school cannot partner a Church of Ireland school because the Anglicans have no schools themselves, only transferor's rights. Both Churches recognise that the problems of Northern Ireland are more to do with politics and economics than education. As one Roman Catholic spokesman said: 'Don't use children to solve Northern Ireland's problems.' But if the Churches were serious about children's Christian education, they should be working out their own requirements for safeguarding their specific interests in integrated schools rather than distancing themselves.

The heady mix of politics and religion militates against rapprochement and ecumenical dialogue in which there is real listening to one another. The country is one renowned for its high level of Church-going among the people. On both sides of the confessional divide, many practising Christians do not often recognise in any large degree that, when they pray for the unity of Christ's Church, actions are as important as words. Ecumenism is not infrequently met with a groan of apprehension at the flood of paper it can produce, and at the inevitably technical nature of parts of the theological discussion. But in Ireland, of all places, the dialogue is no abstract discussion but a road along which Protestants and Roman Catholics can refuse to travel only if they are determined to perpetuate the rancour and violence of the present.

## CHAPTER VII

### CONCLUSION

'The search for unity and ecumenical concern are a necessary dimension of the whole of the Church's life' (Pope John Paul II's address to the Roman Curia, 28 June 1985).

Each chapter of this thesis on 'ecumenical' education has concluded with its own synopsis of issues and pointers for future debate. The intention of this conclusion is not to provide further extensive résumés, but to address the original research questions more explicitly, collating materials and data from different chapters as appropriate.

First, however, it is worth noting that there have been two deliberate limitations in the focus of this thesis. It would have been possible to include an extensive discussion of trends in twentieth century ecumenical theology or to develop a more philosophical analysis of Christian education, but these projects, worthy though they are, have had to fall to the cutting-room floor for another research project. As noted in the introduction to chapter 4, the study belongs more to 'deliberative' discourse than to 'utopian' or 'scientific'.

The second limitation is that the nature of case-study research makes generalisation problematic. Thus it might be argued that, rather than being 'ecumenical', the two schools are particular in their denominational focus. St. Bede's is specifically Anglican/Roman Catholic, though with the Free Churches waiting in the wings. Lagan College involves families from most Protestant traditions alongside Roman Catholics, but is situated within the

very specific religious context of the Northern Ireland Churches. If 'ecumenism' refers to a rather wider inter-Church dialogue than just Anglicans and Roman Catholics (such as is now possible within Churches Together in England or the World Council of Churches) or even to the broader context of inter-faith networks, then these two schools clearly have 'ecumenical' limitations. Similarly, since both are secondary schools, their experience may not be usefully comparable with Church of England/Methodist foundations in first, primary or middle schools.<sup>1</sup> Nonetheless, whatever their specific limitations, the two joint Church secondary schools with which this thesis has been concerned see themselves as powerful witnesses to the more general ecumenical theme that the divisions of the past can no longer be accepted without question<sup>2</sup>. They challenge the historical polarity between Protestants and Roman Catholics in education, as well as representing a significant ecumenical project in their own right.

Although case-study by itself may yield no generalisations, firstly we may and will use case-study data to test generalisations. Secondly, taken together with the more general arguments of chapters 2, 3 and 4, our case-study data may permit some reasonably persuasive general conclusions.

Taking the first two research questions together, **what are the circumstances under which joint Church schools come into being and in which they survive and flourish?** In both case-studies, the

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<sup>1</sup>Of 55 Methodist schools, 27 are currently jointly managed with Anglicans

<sup>2</sup>Many liberal-minded Roman Catholics reacted angrily to Cardinal Hume's restatement in April 1993 that Anglican orders remain 'null and void' (cf. Leo XIII's *Apostolicae Curae*, 1896).

evidence firstly suggests that a combination of the courageous vision of the founders and creative pragmatism was vital to the schools' success. In both schools, the support of parents and staff committed to the ecumenical venture created an atmosphere of Christian charity and goodwill which allowed anxieties to be shared and explored: we have noted that, far from exacerbating the tensions inherent in new ventures, Christian understanding brought together all those involved to the benefit of the school community.

However, if both schools were inspired by an ecumenical idealism, they differed in practical motivation. For Redhill, the initial incentive was to create a viable Sixth Form and establish a strong Church secondary school in the local area; for Belfast, the desire was rather to create an alternative choice both to secondary intermediate schools and to sectarian education generally, enabling the Lagan 'experiment' to gain widespread recognition.

Secondly, we may ask, how essential was the support of the Churches in the process? Certainly in Redhill, unlike Belfast, the backing of the diocese, deaneries and local parishes as well as the LEA was critical in establishing firm foundations. St. Bede's took care to bring the Churches 'on board', ensuring that anxieties were responded to sensitively and reassurances offered: through their Christian Education Committee, the governors continue to keep this area under review. However, the founders of Lagan College demonstrated that the support of the Churches is not always a prerequisite: their lay initiative, backed by majority public opinion, strove constantly for Church recognition, but in the end had to 'go it alone' with neither Church nor government involvement. Their success despite these constraints may be explicable by reference to the somewhat 'apocalyptic' situation of Northern

Ireland : in normal circumstances, it would probably be difficult to operate a joint denominational school without official Church endorsement. All the same, the success of Lagan remains a tribute to what can be achieved by strong-minded lay Christians.

Thirdly, the research evidence points clearly to the commitment of staff as being critical to the schools' effectiveness. First and foremost their willingness to explore perceived problems openly and honestly, not fudging or compromising, but 'grasping nettles' early and working through difficulties, meant that apprehensions and prejudices were brought to the surface in an atmosphere of mutual trust rather than allowed to 'fester'. Evidence of this may be seen in the staffrooms of both schools, where there was noticeably less 'bickering' than in many other institutions. If perhaps some staff had feared, or hoped, that an ecumenical school might throw a hazier light on their religious identity or affiliation, they found on the contrary a higher profile given to RE and a more distinctively Christian ethos than in many single denominational schools.

In both schools, many staff were willing to acknowledge that, although they began with an explicit sympathy with the aims of an ecumenical school, they had often been unexpectedly challenged by others' presuppositions arising from different cultures and histories. Particularly for RE staff and chaplains, it was not enough to be merely interested in ecumenical theology : they had to be fully committed to engaging in genuine and frank dialogue with each other and with the pupils, prepared to learn alongside the children and take risks in order to mature in Christian faith and understanding.

Fourthly, how essential was the role of the chaplains? Both case-studies indicated that where they were prepared to commit the time to establishing effective relationships with young people, chaplains could contribute much to the pastoral care of pupils and staff, the imaginative development of liturgical celebrations and helpful liaison with the local parishes and community. In both schools, difficulties had been experienced with individual appointments and Lagan, unlike St. Bede's, had been dependent on the goodwill of honorary chaplains : yet each school was seeking to develop the role further. It would be ironic if the increasing Free Church involvement in St. Bede's accentuated denominational distinctions within Protestantism (eg. through separate chaplains) while Lagan was moving to a more inclusive Protestant chaplaincy alongside the Roman Catholics.

Fifthly, the case-studies suggest, more generally, that the challenge of the joint school, is to demonstrate to all concerned that unity involves not dilution down to the lowest common denominator, but rather enrichment through complementarity of perspectives; not passive tolerance but real growth in Christian insight. Cardinal Hume himself was clear :

‘To make progress in unity, we must approach each other in openness and with total honesty. Unity is gift...it is also growth’ (1988, op. cit. p.137).

At the deeper level, it involves a rediscovery of familiar tradition alongside fresh perspectives on ideas neglected or underdeveloped over past centuries. Providing reassurance for Roman Catholics who fear dilution of their doctrinal tradition and Anglicans or Free Churches apprehensive about autocratic indoctrination takes time and patience, so that confidence can be built up and diversity acknowledged without defensiveness. At Lagan in

particular, since so much depended on the parents' commitment to integrated education, it was important to involve them in first-hand experience of the school if they were to overcome the long-standing prejudices of their segregated communities. In both case-studies, considerable resources were invested to demonstrate that a joint school, in spite of its distinctive culture, was also a fully Anglican/Protestant or Roman Catholic school like its single denominational counterparts, but with that all-important 'value-added' ecumenical dimension.

Turning to the third research question, what was the joint school's contribution to the life of the Churches? By inviting Church representatives to attend major school events and lead assemblies or worship (both eucharistic and non-eucharistic), the schools encouraged greater confidence in more active inter-denominational cooperation among local clergy, whose previous involvement in practical ecumenism may have only extended to well-meaning prayers during annual Christian Unity Week.

In Redhill the annual Year 8 Parish Day stimulated appropriate ecumenical links as clergy worked with each other as well as the pupils, thus demonstrating the school's effectiveness in enhancing local ecumenical partnerships; the role of the two chaplains was also critical to wider relations with the Churches. In Belfast's polarised Christian community, however, only a few clergy were courageous enough to jeopardise parish harmony or risk appearing disloyal to their own denominational schools by publicly endorsing integrated schools. Undoubtedly this served to limit the influence of ecumenism in the surrounding community, although effective support was offered on an unofficial or individual basis.



There were signs that this policy of cool detachment, particularly but not only on the part of the Roman Catholics, was leading to a more secular ethos in some integrated schools where Church support was negligible. If ecumenical issues were discussed in schools, the Churches found them less 'threatening' if within a single denominational context; early research however suggests that mutual Christian understanding is more positively enhanced by the integrated school experience. The potential of such schools to break down barriers and promote conflict resolution is considerable.

However, Future in Partnership pointed out,

'Whilst there may already be joint schools between the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church or with the Free Churches, the ecumenical model is yet to be fully explored. The educational backroom boys raise questions of ownership, Trust Law, and difficulties of sharing places on governing bodies (1984, op. cit. p.100).

Such caution was demonstrated by the dioceses in 1992 when St. Bede's considered widening its foundation to include Free Church representation, and pointed up some of the constraints of official Church affiliation. Lagan, on the other hand, may ironically have had more freedom to develop its own contribution to the Churches through 'unofficial' resources provided by religious orders and honorary chaplains. Certainly Lagan established itself from the start with a wider Protestant representation than just the Anglican Church of Ireland, showing the advantages of lay leadership in exploring new pathways for Christian cooperation along which the Churches might follow.

Alan Brown of the National Society has observed,

'To the outsider it must seem that Anglican paternalism and Roman Catholic protectionism are the biggest obstacles to ecumenical schools... Can all the Churches display sufficient confidence in themselves and be prepared to be vulnerable enough to trust each

other in order to loosen the trenchant (sic) fears of denominationalism'. (1988) 'Church, School and Ecumenism', in McClelland, V.A., Christian Education in a Pluralist Society, p. 46-7.

Religious education and nurture have a significant part to play in this process of building up confidence and valuing the enriching diversity of Christian education. As Peter Sedgwick suggests,

'The Church school will be a witness... to divine grace present in the secular world, where people are led to develop their own potential and the proper diversity of society is affirmed' (p.256). 'Ecumenical church schools offer a vision of religious disclosure and nurture which could be of great value in a future secular culture'<sup>3</sup>.

Leslie Francis also argues that the theology of Christian nurture needs

'to look afresh at the possibilities and problems inherent in a system of ecumenical Church schools operated as a distinctive Christian alternative to a predominantly secular system of county schools' (1990) British Journal of Religious Education vol. 38, no.4.

What then, in answer to the fourth research question, is **the contribution of joint schools to education and society at large?** Certainly where they are successful, they offer a valuable witness to the wider community that Christians can work together for good, in contrast to the world's inter-religious conflicts portrayed on the media. They have immense potential to heal deep social divisions and the scars of still unreconciled memories of past persecution and residual marginalisation, especially relevant in Belfast. Educating young people to see Christian service as a normal part of their *curricula vitae*; to challenge vested interests and seek reconciliation by accepting rather than confronting diversity; to recognise the value of Christian fellowship, confident in their own religious identity without falling back into denominational defensiveness: this is the challenge posed by joint

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<sup>3</sup>Sedgwick P. (1992) 'The Sectarian Future of the Church and Ecumenical Church Schools', in Astley, J. & Day, D. The Contours of Christian Education, p. 263.

schools to the education system and secular society. In the process, they have to guard against the pressures of exclusivity arising from parental choice and oversubscription, and be conscious of the dangers of creating an alternative Christian educational ghetto.

An additional contribution of St. Bede's lies in its example to other Christian schools within the 'dual system' that ecumenical cooperation is vital to Christian witness. Yet Lagan offers something more : by helping to bring about a change in the law to permit integrated education, it has shown itself to be a 'beacon' of reconciliation for all Northern Ireland's schools and their divided communities. By creating an inclusive 'haven' in a society divided by selective and segregated education, Lagan attracts a variety of Christians and non-Christians into one community. The government has been convinced enough to give 100% funding to integrated grant-maintained schools and provide financial support for the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education to promote schools like Lagan. Even if it does not wish to be thought the answer to Northern Ireland's problems, Lagan's success is important for a society searching for signs of hope. Edward Hulmes' reflection is apposite :

'Whether or not Christian education can serve as an instrument for reconciling and for accommodating differences between individuals and groups in this country, not to speak of the wider world of Europe and beyond, depends humanly speaking on the determination of Christians to reflect in their own lives something of the dynamic unity of God, who not only wills that human beings be at one with each another, but also provides the means'.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Hulmes, E. (1992) 'Christian Education: an instrument for European Unity?' in Astley, J. and Day, D. The Contours of Christian Education, p.305.

Joint Anglican/Roman Catholic schools remain relatively few in number nationally<sup>5</sup> even after twenty years of 'experimentation'. Yet it may be argued that **their time has now come**. The 1988 and 1993 Education Acts have shown clearly that Church leaders need to work more closely together if the 'dual system' is to survive and Christian education is not to be hijacked by individual and sectarian interests in response to the pressures of secularisation. Churches with a commitment to ecumenism need to put their theology into practice in the service of education<sup>6</sup>.

In a 1989 survey of opinion among English diocesan bishops about the role of joint schools (English Anglican/Roman Catholic Committee paper 90/6), most were favourably disposed to ecumenical cooperation in education. One RC bishop commented that difficulties about discussing the issues of joint schools arose from insecurity or feeling threatened, both of which he acknowledged were the consequences of 'a limited vision or a lingering pride'. One Roman Catholic diocesan adviser was convinced that the schools needed to 'take ownership of a joint Christian vision that will meet the needs of both communities'. Cardinal Hume has commented :

'Christian ecumenical schools have broken new ground and may well be a significant indication of a way forward' (1988, op. cit., p111).

In Belfast, such schools would undoubtedly be assisted by a more positive commitment from the Churches in a society torn apart by social and religious

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<sup>5</sup>In 1992-3, there were 8 joint secondary schools in England, one non-denominational and one Associated Sixth Form. In Northern Ireland, there were 4 integrated secondary schools but many more primary schools.

<sup>6</sup>A senior spokesman for Lambeth Palace commented privately (March 1993) that joint schools were one of the 'success stories' of recent Anglican/Roman Catholic dialogue in England.

divisions, but the difficulties are considerable and complex.

This thesis has offered some optimistic indications for the future : firstly in the strengthening of political alliances between the Churches<sup>7</sup> over the important educational legislation in 1988 and 1993; secondly in the reaffirmation of common Christian values and culture in contemporary secular society and the belated attempts to support effective religious education in the classroom.

The two joint school case-studies have shown in their different ways that mere dialogue between Churches is not enough: it must lead to Christian unity in action. The underpinning of this action owes a debt to theologians and Church leaders who since the second Vatican Council have sought to clarify important areas of difference and convergence, but young people of future generations need to experience this ecumenical vision for themselves, preferably during their formative years at school, if they are to retain those convictions in later life and play their part in moving the Church towards unity in Christ. At a time when ecumenical cooperation is official Church policy, often strongly supported by lay Christians in their own communities, the opportunities presented to expand the number of ecumenical Church schools should be seized – that is probably the most important conclusion of this thesis.

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<sup>7</sup>This is supported by the Churches Joint Educational Policy Committee, first established in 1959 by Bishop Graham Leonard, incorporating Anglicans, Roman Catholics and Free churches : he revived it on his return to London in the 1980s in time to play a crucial role in lobbying for the clauses on RE in the 1988 Act. The then Secretary to the Board of Education said 'CJEPC was probably the best means of dealing with matters involving legislation and relations with Government in England and Wales' (minutes, 6th October 1988).

A ecumenical school is unlikely to succeed if it is taken merely to embody indifferentism. But if diversity of custom, liturgy, and theological tradition is compatible with authentic unity at the level of essential faith, then joint schools point the way for a future liberated from entrenched hostility and distrust, with beneficial consequences for a harmonious civilized society.

Archbishop Robert Runcie presents the challenge :

'In the early years of Christian ecumenism, enthusiasts for unity thought that if Christians of different denominations learned more about one another, they would come to discover that what united them far outweighed what divided them. There was truth here, but more recently we have come to appreciate diversity within the Christian Church and seen it as enrichment rather than enfeeblement... We must move from dialogue to partnership... the rich diversity of religious traditions and communities is one of God's greatest gifts to his world'.<sup>8</sup>

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